

# GREEK ART

MYRTALI ACHEIMASTOU-POTAMIANOU

## BYZANTINE WALL-PAINTINGS



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# GREEK ART



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## **BYZANTINE WALL-PAINTINGS**

Dr. MYRTALI ACHEIMASTOU-POTAMIANOU  
Director of the Byzantine and Christian  
Museum of Athens

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## PROLOGUE

*In the modern age, deeply scarred as it is by painful disputes and realignments, we have a duty and a moral obligation to promote those values and ideals that have remained constant and unsullied throughout the ages, so that contemporary man, in his spiritual and intellectual anxiety, may be guided effectively on his course to his imaginary Ithake.*

*Greek art is a fertile concurrence of myth and reason, a perfect matching of idea and deed, a celebration of and a hymn to mankind and his works. Through its continuity, its cohesion, its ability to assimilate, and its robust vigour over the long course of its evolution, Greek art has become a life-giving spring, the fount of spiritual and intellectual endeavour, and a decisive parameter of our moral destiny.*

*Ekdotike Athenon long ago noted the lack of a comprehensive work through which the reader could become acquainted with, or consolidate his knowledge of the multi-faceted and diverse representational arts of Hellenism, from the Neolithic period to the present day. We feel that there is a pressing need today for the publication of a series of visually rich, scholarly volumes devoted to the complete spectrum of Greek art; a need for Greeks not only to become acquainted with their own roots and to forge their cultural identity, but also to proclaim the achievements to the Greek nation and ensure a proper awareness of Greece's historical role, both within the European Union and internationally. Three eminent Greek scholars, the late Manolis Andronikos, and Manolis Chatzidakis and Chrysanthos Christou, both members of the Athens Academy, shared our concerns and have made invaluable contributions towards the planning of this arduous, time-consuming and costly enterprise. They have not only selected the forms of Greek art to be presented in each volume, and determined its structure, but have also assigned the composition of the relevant texts to experts and scholars of repute.*

*In accordance with the overall plan for the series, which will initially comprise fifteen volumes, the art of the prehistoric period is presented in a single, comprehensive volume, the Dawn of Greek Art – Early Art, Cycladic, Minoan and Mycenaean Art; the art of Antiquity appears in five volumes (Ancient Vases, Ancient Sculpture, Gold Jewellery, Ancient Silver and Bronze, Ancient Coins); the art of Byzantium in four volumes (Byzantine Mosaics, Byzantine Wall-paintings, Byzantine Icons, Byzantine Illuminated Manuscripts); and five volumes are devoted to the art of Modern Hellenism (Folk Art, Modern Greek Engraving, Modern Greek Sculpture, Nineteenth Century Painting, and Twentieth Century Painting).*

*Each volume is divided into three sections. The first contains a general introduction that records the evolution of the art form dealt with by the volume, with reference mainly to matters of style. This*



is followed, in the second section, by a superb illustration of the most brilliant and representative works of the art form in question, which have been specially photographed in situ on monuments, and in museums, art galleries, and public and private collections, in Greece and abroad. This is an uninterrupted, self-contained unit that enables the reader to approach the works depicted directly, both as individual items and as an ensemble, without any visual or intellectual distraction. For, over and above their obvious dependence on the socio-historical context of their period and the personality of their creator, works of art also function as entities in their own right, with an innate, autonomous value. The third section of each volume consists of full, concise entries dealing with the works, which offer an aesthetic analysis and evaluation, relevant historical information, biographical data relating to their creators or brief discussions of the monuments that they adorn, and bibliographical notes. Finally, each volume is enriched by a general bibliography, an index and, when necessary, diagrams.

The challenge, and consequently the responsibility, involved in carrying out this noble and ambitious enterprise, is unquestionably great. In the past, however, Ekdotike Athenon has readily accepted similar challenges, and is widely respected for the high quality of the resulting publications — a quality that has been recognised and has received accolades both in Greece and at international level. On this occasion, too, we have made every attempt to respond to the challenge with the reliability and sense of responsibility for which we are known, and which now set their seal on our presentation and promotion of the Greek cultural heritage not only to its natural heirs and guardians, but also, through the foreign language editions of this monumental work, to the entire world; for it is our belief that:

And from hope's struggle a new earth is made ready  
So that on a morning full of iridescence  
The race that vivifies dreams  
The race that sings in the sun's embrace  
May stride forth with eagles and banners

*(Odysseus Elytis, Selected Poems, ed. E. Keeley - P. Sherrard)*

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## BYZANTINE WALL-PAINTINGS

### WALL-PAINTINGS: SIGNIFICANCE, EVOLUTION, TECHNIQUES

Wall-painting was much cultivated in Byzantium. One of the most accessible artistic genres, of paramount significance in church decoration, it reproduced saintly figures and sacred events, communicated the doctrines of the Orthodox faith, and furnished models of the life in Christ – a moral and spiritual armament for believers. Inseparably linked with liturgical ritual, as its painted explication, it developed alongside the more splendid mosaic in monumental art, its materials simple, its garb more modest, its ideas rich and fertile.

In its manifold manifestations and throughout its thousand-year flowering (324-1453), Byzantine art was steadfastly orientated towards the painterly conception and perception of the figure as a means of conveying the truth of the supersensual. The figure described, through the visible, the indescribable and invisible, and confessed the glory and grandeur of God; it expressed the very essence of Byzantine religious cosmology. The conscious devotion to painterly values in Christian art, in a reaction to the emphasis on the sculptural and the three-dimensional in Graeco-Roman representations, ensured the pre-eminence of wall-painting. An art for large surfaces, evolved from antiquity, with a facile and familiar technique, wall-painting was used extensively in Early Christian times, to decorate catacombs, houses of prayer, and the martyria of saints. Continued in Byzantium, it held a significant place in the artistic validation of the theological universe.

Whereas the brilliant art of mosaic, which adorned

the triumph of the Church from early on, being a genuine expression of Byzantine aesthetic magnanimity, was the preserve of high circles, wall-painting, which lacked its unqualified sumptuousness and was less expensive and quickly executed, became the property of all social strata in the decoration of churches. In its ecclesiastical use – only scant remains of its temporal have survived – it was adaptable, immediate, often bold in its views; in its historical course it was flexible in the modifications, fluctuations and changes which determined the style of each period, and sensitive to the theological nuances of issues of dogma.

Eloquent, readily apprehensible and widely accepted, wall-painting held sway as an instrument of imperial policy and ecclesiastical influence; it became, above all, a basic medium of artistic and ideological expression, and of communication between the peoples who made up the ecumenical empire of Byzantium, for it was, in a general sense, the most 'democratic' of its art forms. Truly, in a world of ranked structures, whose fundamental characteristic was religious piety and whose basic bond Orthodoxy, the wall-paintings in the churches provided, within the bounds of dogmatic and hieratic decorum, freedom of choice or inspiration of graphic ideas, in the formulation and circulation of which all citizens could participate as creators, patrons and recipients of the painting programmes.

Mosaic decorations were confined to the palaces and the important ecclesiastical foundations of monarchs, aristocrats and prelates, at the centre and in the provinces. They became increasingly rare and by the early fourteenth century were completely absent from churches. Wall-painting, on the other hand, was ever-



flourishing and continued to produce well-executed works, with abundant examples of delightful artistry; the timeless reality of holy figures and events frequently throbbing with a calm, joyous pulse of the present and sometimes with its existential anguish. Descriptive, narrative and symbolic, with a predilection for the beautiful, wall-painting taught Virtue and Order, with eschatological dialogues delving deep into the hope of the world to come, and developed complex theological concepts, while at the same time giving simple answers to questions of faith, piety and worship.

Through the illustrations, the word of the Gospel, the readings and the hymns of the liturgy acquired a tangible — didactic for the illiterate — substance, and the saintly figures, seemingly brought to life in the diffuse light, were spiritually present at the rites celebrated. Reciprocal in its relationship with the other art forms used in church decoration, and inextricably linked with its spiritual content, wall-painting followed the evolution of the liturgy in its iconographic development. Thus it contributed to the approaching of the transcendental, to the understanding of the incomprehensible and to the rendering of the mystical beauty of holiness, while at the same time revealing paths of logical worship and salvation for the soul.

Unlike mosaics, wall-paintings usually extended over all the mural surfaces, even the lower sections, and occasionally covered external walls too. This decoration was thus eminently suited to the development of programmes encompassing broad iconographic cycles and including a wealth of figures. The articulation of the individual parts and their organization in a whole, bound up with the concept of the church as the image of the heavenly and the earthly world, was governed by theological tenets which stipulated the ranked positioning of representations and figures according to a strict dogmatic system in which there was no room for the superfluous. A system founded on compositional symmetry and geometric stability, its symbolism also in harmony with the architectural surfaces.

Constantinople, capital of the realm, formed, accepted, crystallized and established the fundamental

principles of the programmes, the iconographic models and the styles. From here they were transmitted to other artistic centres and, through diverse channels, eventually reached the painters working in the far-flung provinces. The tremendous variety of form and content which distinguishes church wall-paintings is the outcome of dynamic processes, the coexistence and synthesis of the old and the new, the combination of the Classical with the anticlassical in Byzantium's never-ending dialogical relationship between Hellenism and the East. It is due to the coincidence of preferences, transformations and innovations which defined the successive application of models, depending on artistic origins, the particular local cult of saints, and other conditions. On the theoretical side too, this variety reflects the creative course of art, as well as the powerful agreement of the tradition-bound movement in the spiritual domain of the Church.

From the point of view of technique, wall-painting was usually a combination of *buon fresco* and *fresco secco*. Any unevenness in the wall construction was obliterated by the application of three successive layers of plaster, of different thickness and composition, which provided a substratum of suitable texture. The final coat was fine, clean and smooth, and so perfectly processed that it imparted a translucency and glow to the colours. The representations were drawn and painted while this layer was still fresh and damp, a task which demanded considerable speed and artistic dexterity, and steadiness and precision in sketching and modelling. Formal and decorative details were usually applied when the plaster had dried, over an area that depended on the artist's technical ability and experience, as well as on the painting technique used in the various stages of the process — from the initial sketch to the final highlights. Just a few square metres were executed in a day; the next day a new layer of stucco was applied to the adjacent surface and painting continued. The work progressed from the top downwards, from the roof to the walls, and from central to secondary surfaces. Alterations to the preliminary sketch of the figures and other corrections, as well as superimpositions at the edges of the painted plaster, denoting the successive days of work,



are frequently visible, particularly in provincial, less prominent decorations.

The colours, basically earth pigments, were prepared from inorganic and, in part, organic substances. These were mixed with distilled lime-water — with organic gums for *fresco secco* — which consolidated the painted crust through chemical union with the plaster, bonding the chromatic surface with the wall and giving it lustre. The single uniform colour of the ground, which indicated the conventional, abstract background to the representations and figures, constituted a unifying element, harmoniously linking the painted assemblage with the building. Instead of the white ground of Early Christian wall-paintings, the Byzantines preferred, from quite early on, the blue of the sky — this featured in mosaics at the beginning, before it was replaced by gold — in various hues from pale to dark, almost black. White was used sporadically in funerary representations, red on the disc of the Pantokrator high in the dome, and sometimes in other compositions, ochre or green appeared less frequently, in the medallions of saints. The Byzantines, with their rare sense of luxury, did not hesitate to use precious and expensive materials in select wall-paintings: costly lapis lazuli for the blue of the ground and the garments, gold on the halo of Christ and of saints, on garments and ornamental details, and even on the ground in imitation of mosaic, and, more rarely, silver in analogous positions.

As the centuries rolled by, damaged wall-paintings underwent repairs and overpainting. Likewise frequent was the covering, for various reasons, of early wall-paintings by new ones showing the same or different subjects. These were either painted directly on top of the previous ones or on an overlying preparatory layer of fresh plaster. The renovation of the painting, in part or *in toto*, or its extension on to surfaces originally undecorated, also amounted to a systematic or a partial intervention. In many instances this was repeated on successive, locally restricted layers in different periods. Thus in Greece, where the majority of the surviving Byzantine wall-paintings are located, over two thousand painted layers are known and the map is continuously changing as new discov-

eries are made. The paintings upon paintings, usually fragmentary since they were the offerings of devout Christians from all walks of life for the salvation of their own or their relatives' soul, create an image of churches as living organisms in the practice of worship. They are a diachronic testimony to views of art which each time signify with remarkable frankness the level of their bearers' aesthetic aspirations and spiritual cultivation.

### EARLY BYZANTINE AND PRE-ICONOCLASTIC PERIOD

During the Early Byzantine period the ancient fundamental ideas to which the ecumenical empire of Byzantium, established in Greek lands and the Hellenized East, was the natural heir were interwoven with the spiritual ideal of Christianity to produce a new artistic synthesis appropriate to the illustration of crucial theories. Its structure reflected principles which determined the existence of Church and State, and others which assimilated its harmony of forms to particular local cultural assets and affinities.

In church paintings the human figure, still 'the measure of all things', ruled the firmament of decoration. Transubstantiated into an icon of holy and saintly persons, it subsumed traits which distance all that is illusory and ephemeral in nature, in order to project the immutable truth of their presence. Idealized figures of the saints, with serious faces, formal pose and measured movement lead souls heavenward, transcend time with wisdom, and transport the mind to the sphere of the supersensual. Their creation was governed by canons which were to define the tradition of Byzantine art: abstraction, through spare tracing of the figure's parts and its transmuting to proportions capable of expressing the spiritual; the symbolic value of the decorative element; the stability, wavering intensity and duration of line; the harmony and boldness of colour, in the contrasts or in the sobriety of tones and shades. Henceforth the accurate portrayal of actual and imaginary models and the illustration of sacred events with essentially stable types were to



constitute an inviolable precondition. Without fettering artistic inspiration, indeed with its compliance, the correspondence of word and image was ensured through the centuries in the preachings of the Church, which the art in church decoration served with consistency and vitality.

Few wall-paintings have survived from the Early Byzantine period (324-624) and the years prior to the iconoclastic controversy (mid-seventh century-726). Scattered in the provinces and in regions within the ambit of Byzantium's influence, they record major junctures in the formation of monumental painting before the catalytic watershed of the Iconomachy. Frequently fragmentary and difficult to date, they give only a general idea of this art form before the seventh century. The glory of the Early Christian era was maintained by the great works in mosaic.

Sections of the wall-paintings in the church of Ayios Demetrios at Thessaloniki, which escaped destruction by the fire of 1917, have been attributed to the original painted decoration of the monument. As in Ayios Demetrios, mosaics and wall-paintings from surfaces of secondary importance also existed in the episcopal church at Stobi, c.500. The Red Church at Peruchitsa, near Philippopolis (Plovdiv), preserves sections of rich decoration with thematic units popular at that time — from the Old and the New Testament, and others — arranged in registers in a continuous narration. Slender figures of Hellenizing aspiration, of uncertain date, either c.500 or in the seventh century, they are distinguished by their deft modelling, vital movement and vivid coloration, which suggest an important artistic centre, most probably Constantinople.

Other wall-paintings, in Egypt, Syria and Cyprus, implement or partake in, with local deviations, the Byzantine concept of artistic form, which is replete with experiences from antiquity and transmits theological messages. In its various stylistic tendencies it insists on the organic linking of the Classical with the anticlassical, each time balancing their active conciliatory weight to different ends and in diverse ways.

The authentic expression of grandeur, the hieratic solemnity and the heavily articulated equilibrium as components of Byzantine composition in the golden

age of Justinian, which were epitomized, with the magnificence of a sacred presence by the Virgin as Queen in Santa Maria Antiqua at Rome, retreated at the end of the sixth century. Dated wall-paintings of the seventh to the early eighth century in Santa Maria Antiqua, most probably the works of Greek painters in the years when Greek and Eastern popes were frequently incumbents of the spiritual See of Rome, are revealing for the consecutive artistic currents flowing through this crucial and unsettled era. The redefinition and the juxtaposition of the Classicizing and the so-called abstract style, which split artistic expression in two, arising from different starting points and viewpoints and contributing in common to the figure's spiritual intensity, characterize the critical attitude of the times.

Of exceptional significance in an era of paucity of mosaic decorations, the wall-paintings in the Rome church provide examples of these styles, the quality of their art often bespeaking their Constantinopolitan provenance. In its modelling and pose the refined, seventh-century representation of St Solomoni with the Maccabees harks back to ancient models, the revival of which in Heraclius's reign is attested also by works of other categories. The superb angel of the Annunciation, which succeeded the sixth-century Virgin as Queen on the 'palimpsest' wall, stands out with the Hellenizing grace and nobility of a delicately modelled figure, while St Habbakyros projects with expressive force the linear simplicity and clarity of the abstract style cultivated by Coptic art. The dedicatory representations of the seventh century in Santa Maria Antiqua, like the analogous mosaics in Ayios Demetrios at Thessaloniki, do not belong to a specific programme. As independent icons of saints on the lower parts of the walls they reflect the increasing use of portable icons in worship, which may well have been their models.

In the Byzantine East in this period, two representations in encaustic technique, in the katholikon of the Monastery of St Catherine on Mount Sinai, are unique. Depicting the Sacrifice of Isaac and Jephtha's daughter, eucharistic scenes prefigurative of the sacrifice of Christ, they belong in the thematic repertoire



of the sanctuary, of which they decorate pillars. In comparison with the marvellous Justinian mosaics, they display a slacker structure, a facility of line and a decorative inclination, and probably date from the seventh century.

High-quality wall-paintings are found alongside the fine seventh-century mosaics in Ayios Demetrios at Thessaloniki, where a handsome archangel of Hellenizing art, in rhythmical *contrapposto*, high in the sanctuary, and representations of saints in reverent poses and with an abstract disposition like that in the mosaics, survive on the walls. Of special significance, by virtue of its position in the church of the city's beloved patron and obviously connected with a miraculous intervention by St Demetrios to save Thessaloniki, is the wall-painting of a historical scene showing the triumphal entry (*adventus*) into the city of an emperor, perhaps that of Justinian II in 688. Although difficult to interpret, the representation nonetheless gives an idea of the secular scenes of historical content which embellished palaces and mansions.

The triconch church of the Panayia Drosiani, on the Aegean island of Naxos, presents perhaps the fullest, albeit frugal, programme surviving from a frescoed church of the seventh century. Though dedicatory, the 'holy icons', as they are characterized in the foundation inscription, belong to a calculated iconographic whole which covered the greater part of the little church, which was possibly a mausoleum. Of exceptional significance for the dogmatic views held in an era plagued by theological strife and struggles against Monotheletism, is the double depiction of Christ in the dome. He appears mature and bearded, and younger with a short beard, in two medallions, surrounded by the symbols of the Evangelists, in an explicit declaration of the two natures and of the consubstantiality of the Word. Unique of its kind, this representation is also important as the only known depiction of Christ in the dome of a church pre-dating the Iconomachy. The sanctuary apse is decorated with the Ascension, the north conch with the Virgin Nikopoios and below is the Deesis, one of the earliest known, its apocalyptic and soteriological content

linking it with the concept of God's Wisdom. Notable wall-paintings at an artistic level, too, especially for a small provincial church, they doubtless drew on elaborated artistic models which the gifted artist rendered with expressive clarity, creating portraits with often strident colours: figures with lively poses, free movement and broad folds on the garments, others delicate and restrained; the very beautiful Virgin Nikopoios of Classical mien, and wonderful angels.

The more important, episcopal church of the Panayia Protothroni at Chalki on Naxos preserves a few wall-paintings in the sanctuary — full-length apostles on the lower part of the apse and St Isidoros on the window jamb, like an icon — works more or less contemporary with those of Drosiani. The apostles with their princely stature, and the generous folds and finials on the robes and himatia patterned with fine angular and linear designs, display the extravagant modelling of a solid art.

The sections of wall-painting from the decoration of Pope John VII (705-707) in Santa Maria Antiqua at Rome, permit the reconstitution of much of the wide iconographic programme. The representations of the Life and Passion of the Lord in the sanctuary culminate in the public worship of the Crucified Christ on the face of the apse, where the presence of Pope Martin I gives the theme theological and political connotations, too. Painting of wonderful strength and precision, the dynamic collaboration of line and colour creates choice portraits of the apostles with personal features and a direct, lively gaze — compositions with a sense of drama, figures with vitality of movement. The work's progressive position, equally indicative of its direct dependence on the governing art of Constantinople, is attested by the rendering of many of the Christological representations with advanced iconographic types, which were to prevail in the Middle Byzantine period, after the Iconomachy; as the Ascension in the Panayia Drosiani indicates correspondingly, with its typological and compositional flexibility. The wall-paintings of Naxos today broaden the horizon of the interpretative connections of the Roman monument with works of the Byzantine sphere.



The wall-paintings in the triconch church of Santa Maria at Castelseprio of the Lombards, north of Milan, are a masterpiece of Classicizing style. The eight representations in the sanctuary — in registers in a continuous narration illustrate the Infancy of Christ, from the Annunciation to the Presentation in the Temple. As at Peruchitsa, these are frequently inspired by the apocryphal Protoevangelion of James and promote the dogma of the Incarnation, while simultaneously extolling the place of the Virgin Mary in this. An excellent work by a Greek painter, it exudes the charm of an art in absolute mastery of its means, with noble, airy figures in an ethereal light, effortlessly modelled in a painterly manner, moving freely in their dialogical relationship and set in perspective against landscapes of Pompeian character. Proposed dates for the creation of this intriguing work range from c.700 to the first half of the tenth century. The affinity with wall-paintings of comparable style in Santa Maria Antiqua, and the exceptional ease and directness of the Classical modes favour the widely accepted early date, though some traits exist suggestive of a date c.800, or in the ninth-tenth centuries, in the Macedonian emperors' 'renaissance'.

## MIDDLE BYZANTINE PERIOD

### The Iconomachy

The development of religious painting was cut short by the violent persecution of the icons launched by Emperor Leo III Isaurus. The protracted iconoclastic controversy which plagued Byzantium from 726 until 843, with fluctuating intensity and an interim restoration of the icons (787-815), had serious ramifications and consequences for the life of the empire. A movement primordially religious and spiritual in character, which brought political authority into conflict with the Church, its pretext was the tendency to excess in the cult of icons and its result the total ban on the representation of holy figures. Their place was taken by the 'thrice blessed type of the cross'.

The Iconomachy was catastrophic for many of the

earlier works of art, and the abnormal conditions it created were hardly favourable to the painting of churches. Existing figurative decorations were over-painted with aniconic ones, and not only at the centre, which experienced the full vent of the persecutions, but also in the provinces — the wall-paintings in the Panayia Protothroni on Naxos provide an interesting example in this respect, where an aniconic composition of an arcade with crosses covered the seventh-century wall-painting of the apostles in the sanctuary apse. In the new works, evidently few in number, the painters, guided by the iconoclasts' theories, fell back on symbolic and decorative motifs of the Early Christian repertoire and some of Islamic origin, in order to decorate the churches with geometric, floral and zoomorphic designs, on which the pro-icon authors passed scoptical comments. The sacred symbol of the cross dominated the sanctuary apse, was incorporated in arcade or other formations, and was interwoven in combinations of tapestry-like designs and geometric patterns, to form a fine paradisaical ornament, possibly as an eschatological ideogram. Decoration was limited to the sanctuary, elsewhere it extended also into the nave. In the wall-paintings in Ayios Nikolaos at Kastelli, Merabello on Crete, and in Ayia Paraskevi at Yeroskypou on Cyprus, interesting decoration is preserved in the dome, too.

The aniconic wall-paintings assigned to the time of the Iconomachy or slightly later are numerous. Apart from Thessaloniki, where they have been found in the excavation of a church, they mainly embellished monuments in peripheral regions: Eastern Thrace, Asia Minor (Isauria, Cappadocia), the Crimean Peninsula, Cyprus, the Greek Mainland (Maroneia, Mani, Eurytania, where an archaic type of the Crucifixion is intruded in the aniconic wall-paintings of Episkopi) and, primarily, the Greek islands (Crete, Naxos, Rhodes, Amorgos). Their extent in provincial areas far from the centre, as well as their density in some instances, such as Naxos with its several aniconic decorations dating from the early ninth century, prompt pertinent questions on the participation of the populace in the iconoclastic movement, which have yet to receive a final answer. It is nevertheless obvious that,



in one way or another, iconoclastic ideas found support in the provinces, in the wall-paintings of the churches, where basic decorative elements preferred by the painters are of a certain type, manners are homogeneous, and the compositional articulation of the whole indicates that some programme principles were in common use.

Unable to develop further in the Byzantine environment, the aniconic wall-paintings in the churches degenerated along with the ideas which created them. After the Iconomachy they survived sporadically, symbolic in content, at the level of folk art and elsewhere, furnishing the ornamental, more economical frame for figurative representations (Cappadocia, Aetolia, Ikaria, Karpathos, Rhodes).

### The Macedonian revival

The tempestuous doctrinal struggles came to an end with the restoration of the icons in 843. The Church emerged from the eye of the iconoclastic storm with renewed vigour. The restoration of the icons of Christ, the Virgin and the saints, a real triumph of Orthodoxy and Greek spirituality, was founded in the 'Horos' of the VIIth Ecumenical Council of 787, which unequivocally declared that the holy icons should be kissed and venerated, wherever they may be, 'whether on sacred vessels and garments, or on walls and panels, or in dwellings and streets'; true worship 'is appropriate only to the divine nature'. The truth of the Incarnation, on which the theology of icons was based, accepting the portrayal (*perigraption*) of Christ which the iconoclasts had doubted, became a theme of central importance in the formulation of the new iconographic programmes which appeared from the second half of the ninth century.

The subsequent development of religious painting was brought to fruition in an age of acme for the Byzantine empire in all fields of political and spiritual life (867-1025). The artistic 'renaissance' under the Macedonian dynasty is marked by the revival of the Classical tradition, with direct or indirect recourse to ancient models through works of the pre-iconoclastic

period supporting the imperial ideology of the New Rome. In church decoration both Hellenizing figures and those of abstract style are characterized by an order, rhythmicality and balance of Classical conception, which pervade the sappy modelling and calm expression, their fixed position in the representational space, and their hierarchical organization in the overall iconographic assemblage.

The return to the earliest exemplars was also appropriate to the spirit of the triumphant Church and the climate of respect for tradition which its readily understandable conservative stance aroused as a reaction to the Iconomachy and its visible remnants. Moreover, the Church, now mature after the long and earnest theological discussions of the preceding period – and this is one of the positive aspects of the Iconomachy – was constructing the underlying principles of the new iconographic programmes for the transmitting of its teaching. Characterized by doctrinal wisdom and simplicity, symmetry and spirituality, these were applied gradually and with the caution necessary for the times.

The architectural type of the domed cross-in-square church, a Middle Byzantine creation, is well suited in its centralized structure, culminating in the dome, to the symbolism of the iconological ideas developed in the painting system. Illustrated in hierarchical order, from the entrance to the sanctuary, and from the position of the congregation to the dome, which is imagined as heaven, are the saints and, higher up, important events from the Life of Christ, according to the liturgical cycle of the great feasts of the ecclesiastical calendar, in a revelation of the Divine Economy. In the sanctuary the Eucharist is celebrated in the constant presence of Christ's sacrifice for man's salvation, of which the Incarnation of the Word was the precondition; its symbol, the Virgin, intercessor for Christians, is on high in the apse. In the dome Christ Pantokrator reigns in apocalyptic majesty, surrounded by the angelic hosts, apostles or prophets. An outstanding creation of Byzantine devotion, the icon of the Pantokrator dominates at the centre of the church, above the earthly congregation, as the ultimate theophany for properly prepared believers, in



mystical proximity of soul and spirit to the saints depicted on the walls and to the rites of worship, the grace of participation 'in Christ'. Though the general iconographic programme, with its roots in the pre-iconoclastic period, was altered in parts, enriched, extended and transformed according to the current doctrinal theory, it was to cleave faithfully in its basic principles to the validation of the microcosm of the Orthodox church, through into Post-Byzantine times. Its progressive implementation was attested in mosaic decorations in Constantinopolitan churches of the second half of the ninth century, known from literary sources, and went hand in hand with the evolution of the liturgy.

Of the few ninth-century wall-paintings known, those in Thessaloniki and its immediate environs merit attention, on account of their central position and secure date. In the second city of the Byzantine empire, the Ascension on the sanctuary apse in the church of Ayios Georgios (Rotunda) is well-adapted to the concave surface of the semi-dome. It would seem that the model was a dome and it displays close iconographic and stylistic affinity with the wonderful mosaic of the Ascension in the dome of Ayia Sophia at Thessaloniki, which dates from c.885. The fact that the Ascension is in the same position in a wall-painting in the ninth-century church at Amastri in Paphlagonia underlines the wider acceptance of the glorious and revelatory epiphany of Christ in the sanctuary apse, where the shimmering presence in the scene of the Virgin Orans is likewise a hierarchical allusion to the concept of the Incarnation. The church of Ayios Andreas at Peristera, near Thessaloniki, preserves part of the decoration of the central dome, with Christ in the eye, probably enthroned, the apostles in the tympanum, along with Paul who, together with Peter, holds a model of the church, and seraphim on the pendentives. Dated to the years after 871, it is perhaps the earliest extant example of the new composition in the dome, with archaic elements and attendant iconographic ideas which define its transitional character. The disproportionate figures, of linear execution and flat, ungraceful art, have traces of gold on the haloes, indicating that special care was

taken to distinguish their icon.

Innovation (*kainismos*) in the arts, as the literatus Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogennitos characteristically notes, took place during the tenth century in an atmosphere of stability and recovery. Numerous frescoed churches in the weird rock formations of Cappadocia, and others in Greece, Cyprus, Southern Italy, Armenia and Georgia, give a picture, albeit fortuitous and incomplete, of extensive artistic activity and an idea of the innovative urge of the times, which is expressed on different artistic levels, depending on the leeway for selectivity offered by the usual conventions of the traditional structure of painting in various areas.

The dozens of tenth-century wall-paintings preserved in Cappadocia, protected in the well-nigh inaccessible rock-hewn churches, provide a fascinating picture not only of the art but also of the social status of their donors and dedicators, who range from humble monks to powerful land-owners from the leading families in Asia Minor. In the first half of the century the variations and modes were drawn from the local tradition of the ninth-century 'archaic' wall-paintings. The gospel story was developed in dense detail, in continuous narrative zones, in the scheme of a primer for the instruction and entertainment of the faithful. A prophetic vision of the theophany of Christ 'in glory' adorned the sanctuary apse. The gradual turn towards the new, dogmatic programmes was completed in the eleventh century. The decoration of the Old (Palaia) church at Tokali in Göreme, one of the fullest assemblages of 'archaic' wall-paintings, summarizes, in the first quarter of the tenth century, their stylistic aspects. Deriving from similar ninth-century tendencies at the centre, these promote the concept of the transcendental with flat figures, lively and expressive in their linear simplicity.

It was in the New (Nea) church at Tokali that, around the middle of the tenth century, a masterpiece of the Macedonian 'renaissance' was created. An ambitious work of monumental magnificence, superbly modelled and luxuriously coloured, resplendent in the azure of costly lapis lazuli and embellished with gold and silver, it was probably commissioned by the em-



inent Phokas family from Asia Minor and inspired by high quality Constantinopolitan models. Models which, at the climax of the Classical ideal, the manuscripts and luxurious minor objects of the imperial court represent. The Tokali wall-paintings are rich, too, in the new iconographic ideas they introduced to the core of local painting. They proposed, as a 'rhetorical' equivalence to the Dormition of the Virgin, the Virgin of Tenderness (*Glykophilousa*) further down on the wall of the sanctuary, in the type and position of a devotional icon from the iconostasis. This is one of the first known representations of an iconographic type of the Virgin which was to be long-lived in Byzantine art — its creation is possibly presaged by the much effaced, pre-iconoclastic wall-painting in Santa Maria Antiqua at Rome.

The wall-paintings in the so-called church of Nikephoros Phokas at Çavousin near Göreme, dated 964/5-969, commemorate the king in the appropriate part of the prothesis: on its apse the imposing representation of Nikephoros, officials and members of his family, and on the face the allegorical scene of Joshua before the angel of the Lord; assembled angels in formal poses, the archangel Michael receiving the humble prayers of a pair of dedicators, and the equestrian figures of Magister Melias and John Tzimiskes beyond, make up a unique system of representations. In clear speech, befitting the ecclesiastical tone in its spareness, the triumph of Nikephoros Phokas's Asian campaigns is declared, the faith of the king-hero of Cappadocia registered, the imperial grandeur of Byzantium extolled. Iconographic connections with the New church at Tokali, elegant figures, vivid colours and Classicizing refinements characterize the work of the gifted painter at Çavousin.

Ripe examples of tenth-century painting also exist in the provincial monuments of the Greek Mainland. The modelled vigour of the figure of Joshua in the *katholikon* of Hosios Loukas Monastery, after 961, is the work of an accomplished painter from the Capital. The earlier, strictly symmetrical portrayal of the enthroned Virgin and Child and adorant angels — after Constantinopolitan models — in the sanctuary apse of the Panayia Kaloritza on Naxos, is accom-

panied by the Prophet Isaiah and John the Baptist in a representation which echoes the development of the ritual side of worship in relation to the eucharistic oblation of the 'bread of heaven', Christ. In later years, at Ayios Stephanos at Kastoria, where there is a veritable surplus of saintly figures, the Last Judgement in the narthex developed the iconographic vocabulary which was to hold sway in subsequent representations of the subject. A monumental composition of breadth and tranquillity, it combines, with decorative facility, traits of abstract style with others of Classicizing air. Lovely frescoes from the first phase of painting adorned the dome in the Protothroni church on Naxos, in the late tenth century, and broad, spatially balanced, Mariological compositions decorated the surfaces of the arms of the cross. The Pantokrator in bust, in the dome, is surrounded by heavenly powers — archangels, cherubim, seraphim — who, in regular alternation with prophets, bear witness to his glory. The iconographic ease, chromatic sensitivity and artistic refinement of the decoration in the Protothroni representations bespeak the painter's conversancy with contemporary attitudes in art at the centre.

The retreat of the Classical element and the turn towards a more spiritual perception of saintly figures is apparent from the second half of the tenth century. By the dawn of the eleventh century the reconciliation of the Classical with the anticlassical, the narrative with the abstract, which had always been the dynamic of Byzantine art, had been crystallized into a monumental, hieratic style of composition which was promulgated as the common artistic language of the age, up until the accession of the Comnenos dynasty in 1081. The painting programmes for the churches were developed in times of artistic foment and the treatment of the iconography in accord with the ritual of worship reflects the didactic disposition of the Church, interwoven with its wider apostolic mission. Spirituality, narrative restraint, sedate and formal rhythm, balanced and symmetrical ordering and ranking of figures in the overall composition of which they are part, are the stylistic traits of the eleventh century. The tendency to abstraction did not annul



the Classical concept of the organic, and the impersonal expression of immaterialized saints is nevertheless sober, noble and benevolent.

The renewal of the cult of icons, which occupied a conspicuous position on the iconostasis, may well have contributed to the formation of the saints' new air of transcendental dignity and hieratic formality in the wall-paintings. Their figures are projected with expressive clarity against a ground which is either indeterminate space or indicated with the sparest of means. The predilection for enclosing the figures in frames, often decorated, like portable icons, is indicative. This is observed at Ayia Varvara in Söğanli, in Cappadocia, Hosios Loukas in Phokis, Ayia Sophia in Ohrid, while the fresco in Ayios Georgios Diasoritis on Naxos is unique; depicting the saint to whom the church is dedicated with his parents, in the lower part of the sanctuary apse, it is arranged as an icon triptych, obviously imitating a portable one.

The large mosaic works asserted themselves in the flourishing picture of the monumental art of the period which, after Basil II Bulgaroktonos (1025), entered a serious political and economic crisis. Wall-paintings, which also complement the mosaic decoration in Hosios Loukas and in Ayia Sophia at Kiev, are preserved in plenty throughout the realm and in the Christian Orthodox countries subject to the influence of Byzantium. Some of the most impressive are in Greece, in the Panayia Chalkeon and Hosios Loukas, others, in Ayia Sophia at Ohrid, Ayia Sophia at Kiev and Karabas in Cappadocia, go beyond the narrow local limits to become manifestations of the great painting of the Capital, which preserve precious evidence concerning the activity, the iconographic programmes and the stylistic perceptions of the era.

At the beginning of the century, the wall-paintings in the dome of the katholikon of the Monastery of the Panayia at Myriokephala in Crete, erected by St John the Xenos, depict the Pantokrator enthroned. In the next cycle prophets and angels surround the Virgin, to whom the church is dedicated. The system of heavenly hierarchy reflects the imperial and ecclesiastical order imposed on the newly-conquered island. The clarity of line and the planar modelling of the

noble, organically articulated figures are an introduction to the spiritual climate of the art of the eleventh century.

In the year 1028 the protospatharios Christophoros, katepan of the theme of Longobardia, founded in Thessaloniki the church of the Panayia Chalkeon, where his tomb is housed. The Virgin Orans with archangels in the sanctuary apse, the Ascension in the dome and the Last Judgement in the narthex constitute the central points of the painting programme, with obvious concessions to the idea of a sepulchral monument, according with the eschatological expectations of the founder. The tender, slender saintly figures are softly modelled and the drapery of the garments has an organic texture. The work of a painter of stature, whom the royal official found in Thessaloniki or brought from the Capital, they display elements which were starting points for the main stylistic tendencies to come.

Slightly later, the wall-paintings in the lateral bays of the katholikon and crypt of the famous Monastery of Hosios Loukas follow the mosaic decoration of the church, so decisive for the hieratic style of the period. The high quality and artistic attributes of these works bear witness to the common origin of the painters and mosaicists; they have the same perception as the mosaics of the expressive immediacy of line, of the pictorial value of the frontal composition and of the transcendental simplicity of the saints, pure in aspect, affable, acquiescent and philanthropic in disposition, their eyes wide open in knowledge of the vision. The painting programme, suited to the liturgical function of parts of the church — with a preference for saints in the katholikon, in harmony with the system of mosaics, and with scenes from the Passion in the crypt, appropriate to its sepulchral use — adds to the cross-vaulted ceilings the decorative melodious echo of a paradisaal landscape with medallions of saints projected against a polychrome ground.

Wall-paintings with the anticlassical character and abstractionist intentions of the style of Hosios Loukas continued to be elaborated in many monuments in the eleventh century, and their morphological traits are also obvious in the early twelfth. Parallel with



these, and from the same source, the Capital, more painterly tendencies emerged in the years around the middle of the century. These are apparent in the modelled rendering of the faces and in the substance of the volume and movement, which articulated the figures on the flat surfaces and enlivened the narration. Painters from Constantinople played a leading role in the formulation of the major iconographic programmes in Ayia Sophia at Kiev and Ayia Sophia at Ohrid, where, together with the representations from the Christological cycle, there was a concentration of those from the Mariological and the hagiological. The Old Testament scenes in the sanctuary of Ayia Sophia at Ohrid were chosen for their eucharistic meaning. The majestic Ascension on the vault, with the pronounced poses of moving figures against the deep blue of heaven, embodies — both in its association with the rhythmical procession of adorant angels on the edges of the arch, and in the frontal stances of the hierarchs below — the elements of a dynamic style which was worked on in the more erudite spirit of the art of the twelfth century. The modelling, the portrait types, the spiritual intensity and the movement of the Ohrid figures are connected respectively with the wall-paintings in the narthex of Ayia Sophia at Thessaloniki, in Karabas in Cappadocia (1060/61), and in Ayios Nikolaos Stegis at Kakopetria on Cyprus, in ways which indicate the extent of this current, the culminating achievement of which is the mosaic decoration in Nea Moni on Chios.

### Comnenian art

Under the Comnenoi (1081-1185) and Angeloi (1185-1204) dynasty the pre-eminence of wall-painting over all other art forms was decisive for the physiognomy of the age. Mosaic decorations were mainly to be found beyond the borders of the realm, proclaiming the leading role and unprecedented influence of Byzantine art abroad. Many wall-paintings of high calibre and often unexpected brilliance — for churches in the provinces — were commissioned by dignitaries and members of the imperial coterie from

leading painters in the Capital, who thus brought the spirit and inquiries of Constantinopolitan high art to the periphery of the empire. These works, the majority of superior quality, dominate the picture of twelfth-century art, thanks to the colourist's ability to capture the shades of a restive and unsettled era, to manipulate and comment on iconographic ideas arising from intense theological discussions on points of dogma relating to the divine liturgy.

Turbulent events at home and abroad, which came to a head in the Byzantines' defeat at Manzikert in 1071, were to lead ultimately to the capture of Constantinople by the Latins of the Fourth Crusade (1204), signalling the end of the Middle Byzantine period. During this interval and for almost a century, the mighty Comnenoi dynasty successfully responded to the crucial demands of the time and ensured, to a considerable degree, the steady rise in the empire's fortunes, which was to be cut short in the final decades of the twelfth century, with consequent decline.

Under the weight of historical circumstance the style and the ethos of art changed. With a remarkable sense of drama, these presaged, followed and expressed the disquiet and conflicts of the period, which they drew together and dynamically united into a whole. With decorative dignity of line and colour they created a densely woven fabric of artistic form which contains the movement, and sometimes the vortex at the end of the century. The spiritual strength which enhances the plain and peaceful aspect of the saints in the eleventh century was succeeded by the emotive passion of the Comnenian style, as expressed in mature form around the middle of the twelfth century. With refined interest and somewhat secular extravagance, this tends towards a psychological approach to man. In the clime of an elegance-loving society the figures acquired a tall, slender and supple stature, poses became exaggerated, and the garments, which cling tightly to the long limbs, roll and billow, carried away in the movement of similar shapes and ending in dense volute finials.

Colour strengthened or deepened into rich tones and sought, through appropriate hues, noble conson-



ances and expressive contrasts. The organization of the painted decoration took full advantage of the Middle Byzantine church to produce and, with dynamic gradations and elevations, to unify the movement and to relate the parts to the central idea of the whole. The figures and the compositions are linked by opposing and crossing meanings in a prelude to rhetorical speech; landscape and figures, through concord of shape, enhance the dramatic result.

There was a proliferation of compositions in the iconographic programme of the churches. The cycles of scenes from the lives of saints, the Infancy of the Virgin and, primarily, the Passion and Resurrection of Christ defined the interest — lively and rekindled by the Christological disputes of the times — in dogmatic issues pertaining to the consubstantiation of the Word, the Incarnation and the Sacrifice; together revealing an intense and tender feeling for the divine and the human drama. The influence of the liturgy on the structure of the programme was expressed with clarity, particularly in the evolved decoration of the focal points of the church. The concelebrating hierarchs appeared in the sanctuary apse in the second half of the eleventh century, and in the latter part of the twelfth the eucharistic theme of the Melismos with the sacrificed Christ. In the dome, the angels paying homage in procession to the apocalyptic Pantokrator; the Mother of God and John the Baptist, and the Preparation of the Throne (*Hetoimasia*) are also united in a system of liturgical ideas analogous with that in the apse, which exalt the divinity of the Word made flesh for the life and salvation of the world.

The wall-paintings in the chapel of the *Ayia Triada* in the *Chrysostomos* Monastery near *Koutsovendis*, founded by *Eumathios Philokalis*, Duke of Cyprus, c.1100, 'for the atonement of his transgressions', are undoubtedly the work of an outstanding Constantinopolitan painter. The expression of early Comnenian art is already formed. A serious mien and irascible facial expressions indicate internal tension. Solid lines, some long, some braided in shapes, and impetuous flares of light excite the movement, disciplined in the dynamic poses of the prophets. In the *Panayia Phorbiotissa* at *Asinou*, 1105/6, the haloed

females on the buildings in the background of the scene of the Dormition of the Virgin introduce the new element of their lamentation into a rhythmical, symmetrical composition, in which the disciples declare their grief through closed outlines and loose, flowing poses, in unsettled order.

The rare, important wall-paintings in the towers of *Ayia Sophia* at *Kiev*, from the reign of *Vladimir Monomachos* (1113-1125), showing activities in the Hippodrome at Constantinople and the hunting of wild beasts, preserve unique secular themes from Byzantine imperial iconography, symbolic of triumph and power. Analogous representations are known to have adorned the royal residences of the Capital.

From the ensuing years, exceptional works of monumental, Classicizing style have survived in the cemetery church and the burial crypt beneath the *Bačkovo* Monastery in Bulgaria, south of *Philippopolis*, perhaps of the second quarter of the twelfth century, and in the splendid church of the *Kosmosotira* (Saviour of the World) at *Pherres* (*Vira*) in Thrace, of the year 1152, a foundation of the sebastokrator *Isaac*, brother of *John II Comnenos*. In *Thessaloniki*, the wall-paintings in the Monastery of *Hosios David* (*Latomos*), c.1160, delight with their nobility of rhythm and poetic grace of line and colour. In these masterpieces of Comnenian beauty the Classical style reaches its zenith; the harmonious synthesis of figures and landscape is achieved, with an unprecedented sense of space, an awareness of drama and an unrivalled perception of human nature. Of elegant aristocratic style, the wall-paintings in *Ayios Panteleimon* at *Nerezi*, near *Skopje*, founded in 1164 by the grandson and namesake of the Emperor *Alexios Comnenos*, gather together elements crucial for the subsequent course of painting. In the representations of the Passion the expression of pain attains a human note hitherto unknown. The slender, well-drawn figures with their exaggerated proportions, fluid and melodic drapery, and often contrived poses and movement, worthy of a courtly milieu, coexist in an aesthetically pleasing and inspired unity of high calibre.

As the empire's decay advanced under the *Angeloi* in the last two decades of the century, church paint-



ing, in its diverse styles, took on the sense of a primeval agony. The figures, stylized and elongated to extremes, moved with vehemence, and the compositions were dramatized. In other aspects, late Comnenian Classicism was sometimes pushed towards prettifying with a sense of melancholy and sweetness of colour, and with a perception of the monumental which made its mark on developments in the thirteenth century. In 1192, one year after the Crusaders' conquest of Cyprus, in the monumental composition in the dome of the Panayia Arakou, the torsion of the prophets is so extreme it recalls the biblical words 'and our prophets were in wind'. In 1191, in Ayios Georgios at Kurbinovo, lofty figures with harsh, well-drawn lines and garments flowing in resonant finials at the climax of the dynamic anticlassicizing style, seem to sense the brewing storm.

## LATE BYZANTINE TIMES

### The art of the Diaspora

After the capture of Constantinople by the Latins in 1204, autonomous Greek states, the Empire of Nikaia, the Despotate of Epiros and the Empire of Trebizond created significant centres of resistance. Consolidating national self-awareness through the struggle against the conquerors, they maintained the idea of continuity and proceeded to the liberation of large areas of territory. Nikaia and Epiros also forcefully laid claim to the recapture of Constantinople, which feat was achieved in 1261 by Michael VIII Palaiologos of Nikaia.

In this critical period, church painting in the free and occupied Greek regions, and the neighbouring Orthodox countries which reinforced their might, constituted the principal artistic genre and so remained until the end of Byzantium. Adapted to prevailing circumstances, and in the absence of Constantinople as the leading regulating centre, the painting of the diaspora conserved, correlated and transformed the old views, vitalizing them with retrospection to the illustrious Byzantine past, and with creative impetus fertiliz-

ing the new ones which were sprouting in the style of the thirteenth century. The dynamic Late Comnenian 'koine' lost ground. Felt rather in marginal manifestations, in time its expressive excesses and linear decorative theory diminished, as did the dramatic impact of the vacua, which were gradually filled. The new monumental style of the period, a continuance of the Comnenian, led the field. Already in the early years of the thirteenth century this characterized ambitious works and projected locally the traits of a regal art which frequently sought analogies and props in tenth- and eleventh-century models. These added a sense of certainty to the linking of the present and the more splendid past, and corresponded with the sophistication of ecclesiastical authority and aristocratic grandeur, and with the ideals of a world which measured its expectations with Classicizing simplicity and fertile modelling, with seriousness, optimism and daring. Expectations which, in these transitional times of fundamental importance for Late Byzantine painting, fused with the Greek ideal to create, through lively, varied and free expressions, the artistic style.

New artistic centres were created and old hearths rekindled. Painters from Constantinople, now in exile and itinerant; from Nikaia, to where the Byzantine court and the patriarchate had transferred; and from Thessaloniki, which was liberated by Theodoros Doukas of Epiros in 1224, all initiated the new compositions, which bore rich fruit, preparing the way for the Palaiologan flowering. In the outstanding works in the churches these compositions are distinguished by sensitive painting and clear modelling, size, symmetry, serenity and simplicity. Thus they achieve monumentality. The figures are calm, the corporeal proportions, the poses and gestures aim at realistic accuracy, the movement is uncontrived, the psychological disposition of the faces transparent. The modelling of the landscape and architectural environment of the scenes, as well as the human figure, acquires clarity and weight. Passion is expressed in fine lyrical tones of tenderness and emotion, and sometimes elation; it is enriched with symbolisms and rhetorical interventions which arouse the spirit. The teachings of the preceding century were not ignored, but positions on



the pure calligraphic treatment of line and colour were put aside. Freed from the decorative nexus of the dramatized Comnenian composition, of which it constituted a rhythmical element, the human figure acquired a distinct personality, an imposing stature and a monumental presence frequently tending towards frontality; its ethos, psychological state and participation in the events depicted are characterized by expressive frankness. The avant-garde painting of the thirteenth century, which heroized and sanctified man, created with munificence the new aesthetic values of the coming renaissance, which marked the end of the Byzantine middle ages.

The wonderful wall-paintings in the Serb Studenica Monastery of the Panayia, of 1208/9, the work of a great painter, probably from Constantinople, invited by the prince-monk and later Archbishop of Serbia, St Sabbas — as at Zitsa in 1220 — delineate the steady passage to the monumental climate of the thirteenth century, with masterly symmetry, modest modelling and hieratic nobility. The Crucifixion on the west wall dominates by virtue of its position and size. In the suggestive, light blue of the starry sky it weighs precisely the ultimate moment of the sacrifice of the Son of Man. Superb representations in the sanctuary are embellished with the symbolic light of the gold, mosaic-like ground.

The innovative use of gold on the ground of wall-paintings, as a substitute for mosaic decorations in a time of penury, justified the need for luxury and the splendour appropriate to the divine in other royal foundations in Serbia: the Mileseva Monastery, later at Sopoćani and Gradač. At the same time it is attested in the state of Epiros by John Apokaukos in the early decades of the century, for the Metropolis at Naupaktos which was decorated by the painter Epiphanius from Thebes, 'who burnished the church with gold and embellished it with icons'.

In 1222-1228, in the superb painted decoration at Mileseva, monumental figures and compositions, modelled with the fresh force and dignity of official art, measure the peaceful intervals of the gold ground with a sense of majesty, projecting lively, substantial and psychologically complex personalities. The ideas

of the iconographic programme incorporated into the church-mausoleum reconciled Archbishop Sabbas's theological views with the intentions of the dynastic house, which claimed the leading presence of a young Byzantine emperor, probably John III Vatatzes of Nikaia, opposite the representations of the Nemanids in the narthex. Outstanding wall-paintings in mainland Greece — in the Acheiropoietos at Thessaloniki, at Episkopi in Eurytania, in the church of Ayios Georgios at Oropos in Attica — as well as in the church of Saints Peter and Paul at Tyrnovo in Bulgaria, contemporary with and akin to those at Mileseva, favour the view that the painter who worked there came from Thessaloniki.

The exceptional wall-paintings in Ayios Nikolaos at Kyriakosellia, Apokoronos in Crete are credibly associated with the expedition of John Vatatzes to the Venetian-occupied island and the garrisoning of Byzantine troops in the nearby fortress from 1230 to 1236. A highly painterly work of aristocratic conception, which poignantly retains the memory of Classical Comnenian composition in the melody of line and colour, it very probably constitutes an important testimony of the palatial art of Nikaia.

The wall-paintings in the Vlacherna Monastery near Arta offer the most splendid example of painting in the capital of the Epirote state around the mid-thirteenth century. With abundant use of precious lapis lazuli, and gold in places, they are possessed by a sense of decorative opulence. This, together with the eloquent modelling of monumental tone, defines, with strong reflections from ideas of the past, the picture of court art in the Despotate, which should be connected with metropolitan painting.

In the distant kingdom of the Grand Comnenoi of Pontos, in Ayia Sophia at Trebizond, part of the extensive decoration of marvellous art from the years c.1260 is preserved. The rich rhythm of the drapery of the garments is a point of contact with the wall-paintings in another style at Vlacherna in Arta. The painting programme, of great compositional inspiration and iconographic breadth, deals with sophisticated theological concepts concerning the liturgy and focuses on the work of salvation. Its multi-figural



representations frequently seethe with movement and narrative vitality, and are shaken by the fluttering of angels. The magnificent iconographic conception of the dome, with the countless hosts of angels in veneration round the Pantokrator, the apostles and prophets in the tympanum and the evangelists on the pendentives with selected gospel scenes, was the culmination of the fecundity and the wealth of inspiration which distinguished the highly significant work of the Grand Comnenos Alexios I.

### The art of the Palaiologan period

The triumphal entry of the Emperor of Nikaia, Michael VIII Palaiologos, into the liberated city of Constantinople on 15th August 1261, set its seal on the restoration of Byzantium by the 'New Constantine' and founder of the Palaiologoi dynasty, which was to rule the empire for almost two hundred years. The Capital assumed its ecumenical role and once again became the incomparable centre of spiritual and artistic life, whose influence radiated in all directions. In this final era, the weakened empire, deprived of its former territories and rich resources, and surrounded by enemies, was embroiled in doctrinal differences with the West concerning the unification of the Churches and convulsed by dynastic and ecclesiastical struggles. In the course of two centuries it strongly asserted the Orthodox and Greek national consciousness. On 29th May 1453 the famous 'Queen of Cities' fell to Muhammad II the Conqueror. The sorrowful, lyric laments for Constantinople were to noint Hellenism's irredentist visions throughout the Turkish occupation.

The wall-paintings in the Ayia Triada at Sopoćani in Serbia, c.1265, the church-mausoleum erected by King Stefan Uresis I, are the most splendid and magnificent in the monumental style of the thirteenth century. They herald the ideas of the renaissance in the first Palaiologan period. An assemblage of epic inspiration, imbued with the same Classical spirit cultivated by the Hellenizing society of Nikaia and Constantinople that produced the exceptional mosaic

Deesis in the catechumena of Ayia Sophia in the Byzantine capital, it transmutes the feeling of exultation into painted grandeur and with modelling of unrivalled strength organizes the large compositions, conquering space. The figures are swept away in long, triumphant curves defining breadth and volume, nobility of rhythm unites the movement of individuals and groups into a whole, the visages display impressive strength of character and deep human pathos.

The vigorous painting of the Greek master at Sopoćani marked the apogee of the Classical style in the reign of Michael VIII Palaiologos (1261-1282). The heroic tone was subdued in succeeding years as the new artistic synthesis was impelled towards figures of ponderous and massive appearance and buildings of stereometric structure which impart a marked sense of depth to the scene.

During the reign of Andronikos II Palaiologos (1282-1328) religious painting experienced its great flowering. The anomalous situation (1274-1282) due to the perspicacious Michael VIII's endeavour to unify the Churches, and its final thwarting under the weight of the reaction by Andronikos II, mark the triumphant spirit of Orthodoxy which led the works in the churches to new heights. Numerous wall-paintings commemorating the pious emperor in their donor inscriptions demonstrated, moreover, the power of the state and the cohesive strength of the Church, which exercised its spiritual authority unwaveringly in the free and non-Greek regions and throughout the Orthodox world. The painting programmes were enlarged as never before, as the compositions become smaller, and were enriched with figures, representations and cycles inspired by liturgical and hymnographic tradition. In the religious clime of the age, the particular cult of the Virgin, the cycles from the Passion, the Resurrection and Pentecost, the figures of hierarchs, forefathers, saintly monks and anchorites were widely used in church decoration. About 1284, at Vlacherna in Arta, the Christmas Sticheron was illustrated for the first time, an apotheosis of the Virgin with the unique representation of the Litany of the icon of the Virgin Hodegetria in Constantinople; later, in the Protaton,



the Anapeson and Christ 'in another form' were depicted; in 1294/5, in St Clement (Peribleptos) in Ohrid, Christ as Angel of the Great Will; about 1295, in the Olympiotissa at Elasson, the Akathistos Hymn appeared for the first time. The energetic return to ancient ecclesiastical order took shape in the context of the rebirth of the Byzantine humanistic spirit, with the concentrated theological thinking which bound together the iconographic programmes of the churches, in the elaboration and regeneration of which Constantinople led the way. The immutable truth of Orthodox dogma was projected through the detailed and realistic narration of events from the gospels and other religious incidents. The monumental style of the art, with the highly tactile modelled qualities developed at the end of the century, its dynamic gravity and expressive seriousness, was in keeping with the feeling of triumph and theological prudence.

The decoration of the Protaton church at Karyes on Mount Athos, probably executed during the first patriarchate of Athanasios I (1289-1293, 1305-1310), erstwhile monk on the Holy Mountain, is attributed in the eighteenth-century Painter's Manual of the Athonite Dionysios of Phournas, to the legendary iconographer Manuel Panselinos of Thessaloniki. The theological profundity — distillate of esoteric Athonite life illumined by hesychastic theory — the spiritual quality and the profound Classical feeling bear fruit in the pervasive harmony of the sonorous composition, the clarity of modelling, the beauty of form and the brilliance of colour, which burgeoned in a work of dramatic narrative spirit yet serene disposition. A section of the wall-painting of a saint in the Great Lavra Monastery bears witness to the wider painting activity of Panselinos in the monasteries on Mount Athos.

The decoration in St Clement, in what was then Byzantine Ohrid, dedicated in 1294/5 by the grand hetairiarch Progonos Sgouros, is closely linked with the Protaton. An ambitious work by accomplished painters from Thessaloniki, Michael Astrapas and Eutychios, there is hyperbole in its dexterity, an emphasis on the scenic and an anticlassical tone of disquiet in the dynamic movement of the crowd, which floods the representations in a continuous narration

as in the Protaton. Strong and imposing, the figures of the saints are inferior in quality to the soulful personalities of Panselinos. The gentle maidens, the radiant youths and the venerable old men with heavy, glowering mien remain beyond compare.

In the fourteenth century, Thessaloniki, frequently the epicentre of major events in its position as co-capital, developed intense spiritual and artistic activity, producing religious works with a wide range of influence. The wall-paintings preserved in the city's important churches, in Macedonia and further north in Serbia, where Thessalonikan painters constantly played a leading role, are among the earliest examples. They constitute a rich source for the new trends from Constantinople in the second phase of the Palaiologan style which, abrogating the extremes of heaviness, developed and flourished until the end of the reign of Andronikos II (1300-1330). They also determined the modes and values distinctive of Macedonian painting, in the framework of the always lively climate appropriate to its manifestations.

The decoration of the chapel of Ayios Efthymios in the church of Ayios Demetrios, dedicated in 1303 by a Constantinopolitan dignitary, the protostrator Michael Doukas Tarchaneiotis Glavas, displays affinity with that of the Protaton in the mature modelled style and the figure types. Lacking the robust composition, the bounteous volumes and the magnitude of the previous work, the small-scale wall-paintings of Thessaloniki gain in freedom of painterly expression, which softens the faces, refines the colour and endows the figures with a renewed dramatic disposition, as epitomized by the excellent Peter in the Communion of the Apostles.

The vitality of Thessalonikan painting is attested in diverse ways by the wall-paintings in the city, on Mount Athos, in Veroia, and many in Serbia. They include works which bear the signature of their painters, of Michael Astrapas and Eutychios in the Panayia at Prizren (1308/9), in Ayios Nikitas near Čučer (pre-1316) and in Ayios Georgios at Staro Nagoričino (1317/8), and of Georgios Kalliergis in Christ the Saviour at Veroia (1315). The phenomenon of the three contemporary painters who proudly



promoted their creations is of interest, even though signed works, always regarded as works of piety and divine contrivance, are not absent in this or in previous periods. The case of Michael Astrapas and Eutychios, who after St Clement in Ohrid enjoyed a distinguished career in Serbia, at the court of King Milutin, is unique. Their signed and dated wall-paintings, which span a long period of artistic activity (1295/6-1317/8) present an *oeuvre* in which the course of their art can be clearly traced. The connections, and in some instances the close affinity, with decorations in Thessaloniki and its wider environs indicate that these painters were always conversant with the iconographic and stylistic directives of their region. Of equal significance is the fact that their works offer a remarkably tangible picture of the turn from the first (St Clement) to the second phase of the Palaiologan style.

The most important fourteenth-century church in Thessaloniki is that of the Ayioi Apostoloi — then a monastery church of the Panayia — founded by Patriarch Niphon I (1310-1314). Its exceptional mosaics of Constantinopolitan art are complemented, as in earlier periods, by extensive wall-paintings, of the same high calibre and probably contemporary. Obviously estranged from local painting, which inclined towards more intense expressions of realistic cast and other types of figures, the wall-paintings in the Ayioi Apostoloi are outstanding for their dazzling colour and nobility of movement, the poetry of the large compositions and their iconographic erudition and eloquence. Iconological ideas and iconographic themes identical to those in the Capital support the view that Thessaloniki preserves a rare assemblage of Constantinopolitan painting.

To the hieratic character, the transcendental propriety and the imperturbable majesty of Middle Byzantine art, expressed in the spare, austere rhythmical compositions and the solitary, formal figures of saints, the painting of the Palaiologan period added the 'sweet-smelling meadow' of narrative imagination, its perception of reality, its poetic euphory and Classical idealism. With a rich repository from its thousand-year evolution, it progressively approved

the highly potent image of the 'world's universe' and in the early decades of the fourteenth century the delight of the renaissance blossomed forth, pulsating with grace and movement, drawing on the spiritual vigour, the religious fervour, the philanthropical stance and the sensitive disposition of the Byzantine world of the age.

The firmament of the church rejoiced. The sacred story spread over the surfaces with a narrative inspiration as never before, with a wealth of iconographic cycles, representations, episodes and figures, crowded and complex. Frequently exegetic and didactic, it is inspired by, formulates and analyses with mystical feeling and graphic wisdom, themes from the akolouthies, the homilies and the hymns of the Church. In its various manifestations Palaiologan art, endowed with a sense of drama and a lyrical breath, with rhythmical poetic strength and modelled self-sufficiency, lively and sappy, can be highly charged, while elsewhere it restrains its eloquence with a prudence of Classical tone. A turn towards the secular seasons the scenes with realistic, mundane elements, at the same time bringing a breath of life to the narration. Imbued with humanity and Classical intellect, its form and ethos revel in the spirit of Hellenistic art which it revives from direct or indirect appearances in the past, confirming Greek self-awareness. And at all times its geometric approach to church decoration is manifest in the stability and clarity of composition, closing in the abstractive continence of line and the glorifying excitement of colour the concept of the transcendental which is its essence.

The funerary chapel in the Chora Monastery at Constantinople is decorated with the only intact assemblage of wall-paintings to have survived from the many centuries of artistic activity in the Capital. It is also the crowning creation of Palaiologan parietal art at its zenith. The grand logothetes Theodoros Metochites, one of the most outstanding intellects of Late Byzantine times — humanist, man of letters, author — renovated the monastery, adorning the katholikon with the last Byzantine mosaic decoration; in humility, he preferred wall-paintings for the adjoining chapel. A work of magnificent compositional concep-



tion and execution, it was painted c.1315-1320. The instance of a donor such as Metochites is rare indeed, for knowledge of his personality, of his position regarding crucial political issues and of his literary work contributes considerably to the deciphering of the ideas codified in the wonderful wall-painting assemblage of his sepulchral chapel. The subject of the decoration — appropriate to the setting — the issue of Salvation, to which lead the scenes from the Old Testament prefiguring the Theotokos and the formal composition in the dome of the Virgin and Child, surrounded by festively attired angels and hymn-writer saints on the pendentives, culminates in the triumphant Resurrection in the sanctuary apse and the epic Last Judgement in the vault. Enrapturing in their cohesion, the ideas of the man of letters Metochites, subtle and succinct in their historical thought, but many-faceted in their overt and covert meaning, raise a glorious hymn to the Virgin and Christ, promote the Incarnation which brings redemption and proclaim salvation; they echo his own hope and that of all men in the Future Judgement, including in their narrative documentation and allegorical web the hope too for the desired salvation of the empire. The painting, refined and delicate, attains the highest level of technical perfection. The figures and representations 'hover' in space, there is grace, impulse and noble passion in the movement and the glowing light glissades on the garments. Within the constraints of aristocratic decorum, the relief of the figures is meticulously worked with a rare balance of the modelled and the linear element, creating the rhythm of a concordant and sensitive composition, poetically expressed in unsurpassed idealistic tones.

At Mystras, the town in the foothills of Mount Taygetos, which as seat of a Byzantine 'kephale', and from 1384 capital of the Despotate of the Morea, remained a mighty bastion of Byzantium and an important spiritual centre for two centuries (1262-1460), the many wall-paintings in the churches glorify its memory. Works of great beauty, they bear witness to the close and direct contacts with the Capital and the flourishing course of art in Mystras. Wall-paintings in its wider area enjoyed its radiance.

From the last three decades of the thirteenth century in the Metropolis (Ayios Demetrios) and Ayioi Theodoroi, and until the fifteenth century in the church of the Pantanassa, the painting at Mystras described an impressive orbit. Fertile in modes and trends, sufficient in programmes and mature in iconographic analyses, it received, followed and interpreted contemporary currents. Many of the choice painters working in this lively environment must have come from Constantinople. The direct relationship with the Capital and the palace, which appointed the governor generals and later despots from the imperial family, and the models which Constantinople supplied, explain the high level of art the donors — ecclesiastical and lay officials — demanded in the ambitious works in the churches. Without doubt, the wall-paintings at Mystras offer precious views of the painting of Constantinople, insufflated with the breath of a small and very vivacious society which proudly related its good taste in the figures of the saints.

About the time of the Chora Monastery, between 1312 and 1322, the decoration in the monumental church of the Virgin Hodegetria (Afentiko) in the Vrontochion Monastery was executed. This foundation was built by Pachomios, abbot and grand proto-syngelos of the Peloponnese, and embellished with sculptures and an expensive marble revetment on the lower part of the walls, very little of which has survived. Clarity and order are the keynotes in the articulation of the iconographic programme, which unfolds with calm cohesion of meaning in the nave and the gallery, in the narthex and in the chapels. The painting, which embraces various directions and trends, is distinguished by the highly perceptive use of colour as a means of modelling, sometimes in gentle, harmonious shading and elsewhere in strong contrasts. The compositions are dense and rhythmical, serene or with impulsive movement, and embellished with imaginary edicules, festively spread fabrics, masks and other elements of late antiquity beloved by Palaiologan art. The aristocratic figures are modelled with tranquil grace and sometimes with free poses and strong facial features. Pachomios's personality and erudition are felt above all in the west chapels: in



the north-west one, his burial place, the '*theotokion*' of the requiem mass 'Through the emissary of she who bore thee, Christ' is narrated, with a splendid, aristocratic procession of saints; in the south-west one, a melodious composition expresses the emanation of regal from divine authority and secures God's pleasure in the imperial gifts to the Vrontochion Monastery, which the energetic abbot achieved with the chrysobulls transcribed on the walls, at the same time recording for posterity his great work in the monastery. A work which created solid roots in the artistic tradition of Mystras.

The wall-paintings dedicated in the Peribleptos, probably during the decade 1360-1370, by the noble couple portrayed to the west, praise the Virgin, to whom the church is dedicated, in what is perhaps the most extensive Mariological cycle in Byzantine monumental painting. By rare good fortune the assemblage has survived intact, its stylistic views and iconographic theory very probably constituting an authentic expression of Constantinopolitan art at that time. It charms by virtue of its fervent palette, its noble and melancholy sentiment, and the mystical spirit distinctive of the art of the second half of the fourteenth century, when there was mounting danger and insecurity. The sense of unease acquires a dramatic timbre in the elaborate landscapes with their rocky ravines and precipitous massifs, in the tall buildings with projecting terraces, domes and vertical staircases, in the throng of people and the flowing movement of the figures with their marked flexion of body and wide stride, dispersed and diminished in the perspective distance of the backdrop, submitting to its soaring heights. The colour — in general, in its skilful handling and richness, one of the alluring traits in the painting of Mystras — 'dazzles' in its harmonious diffusion and soothes the ephemeral; and the Classicizing grace of the idealized figures, with their light and airy modelled poses accords with the lyrical breath and inestimable sensitivity of this aristocratic work.

From the second half of the fourteenth century the struggles and victory of Hesychasm, and especially the succession of events which cumulated to create the critical situations the state was increasingly having

to face, led to painting's abandonment of the lively, felicitous modelled disposition and the uplifting narration of the early decades. Around 1360-1380, the deep and disturbed spirituality of the period rendered with fresh impulse works of high artistic calibre, which predetermined, at various stylistic levels, the dynamic of the new air of Palaiologan art. The wall-paintings in the Peribleptos at Mystras, in the church at Ivanovo in Bulgaria, in the Pantokrator Monastery on Mount Athos and in Profitis Ilias at Thessaloniki, with their dialectical attitude towards the works of the late thirteenth and the early fourteenth century, signalled the reassessment of values which led to a manneristic decline and the maturing of fundamental principles which constituted the tense climate of the times. The Classicizing grace of the Peribleptos incubates the drama expressed unequivocally in the representations of the Passion, and its idealism is consonant with the atmosphere of mysticism appropriate to the Divine Liturgy. At Ivanovo the boldness of the painting and the freedom in the modelling of the poses, as well as the relationship of the figures in the Washing of the Feet, are delivered with nervous and rapid drawing and a fleeting intensity of light, which add passion and excitement to the dynamically structured balance of the composition. The painter in the Pantokrator Monastery, possibly a Constantinopolitan, took into account the great heritage of the Protaton in the imposing, elderly figures of saints with the dramatic painterly expression which more widely characterizes a contemporary trend, modelling the planes of the mournful faces with twinkling highlights and strong chiaroscuro which articulates soft and restive volumes. In Profitis Ilias at Thessaloniki, the harsh realism in the depiction of the Massacre of the Innocents, which perhaps echoed recent persecutions suffered by the city, activates the boldness in the poses and characterization of the figures — revealed through novel Westernizing directions and their disposition in space — in order to transmit — and, moreover, with pictorial decorativeness — the immediacy and the inevitability of the events.

The wall-paintings of the second half of the fourteenth and the first of the fifteenth century, their sym-



bolism frequently alluding to current complex views on essential points of dogma responded to man's unconfessed agitation, pronounced spirituality and disquiet with a dignity of artistic form that articulated its own word, very advanced on certain positions, through positively assimilating past wisdom. Closed compositions, many of them no larger than portable icons, and others which spread out with dramatic movement; emphasis on the pictorial, decorative extravagance, the affable gaze of the saints with distilled expression of inner life, the suggestive colour, pulsate in their Classical idealism and anticlassical exhortations with the new element of passion and the quality of light, which, characterize *par excellence* the style of the art. A phenomenon of the age was the dispersion of artists from the major centres of Constantinople and Thessaloniki. They were invited to Orthodox countries, or left in the face of the Turkish threat for safer Greek regions, and created wonderful works in Russia, Georgia, Serbia, as well as in the Venetian-occupied island of Crete. Theophanis the Greek in Russia and Manuel Eugenikos in Georgia are the most famous painters from Constantinople.

The church of the Pantanassa was the last grand work at Mystras. Commissioned by the protostrator and Catholic mediator Ioannis Frangopoulos, it was inaugurated in 1428. The close connection of the architectural type and the painting programme with the Hodegetria — many of the iconographic types are from the Hodegetria and the Peribleptos — rather express the eminent donor's predilection for the two important ecclesiastical monuments of his town. The gifted painter of the Pantanassa surpassed the strictures of the models, his attributes so attuned to the style that the representations are endowed with the joy of authentic interpretation, with a rationalist conception of the compositions, which is understood in the spiritual clime of the hour and the place lauded by Georgios Gemistos Plethon. Light, freshness and vivid colour; a perception of spatial unity and depth, a dynamic organization of the natural and the built environment, an organic articulation in the rendering of cities and edifices; solid modelled movement of figures, a dramatic quality in the narration and a wealth

of graphic details constitute especial elements of the work. In the Raising of Lazarus the scale of the landscape and the tardy movement of figures in distinct groups suggestively create the atmosphere of the miracle. In the Entry into Jerusalem, it is the verdant landscape, the children playing and drinking at the fountain, the walled city of Jerusalem tawny in the light; and Christ proceeds towards the multitude which welcomes him in triumph, but which prepares the Passion. 'Good is the water/ and stony the hand of noon/ which holds the sun in its open palm' (O. Elytis, *To Axion Esti*, Athens 1964<sup>3</sup>, 54). This 'swan song' of the great painting of Byzantium indicates directions traced by the art of the times; directions not destined to lead to a successful end.

## EPILOGUE

### POST-BYZANTINE WALL-PAINTINGS FORMATION AND FLOWERING

During the early phase of the Turkish Occupation (1453-1600) Post-Byzantine monumental painting, as the main manifestation of the artistic life of the enslaved Christian peoples of the Balkans, was gradually formed. It enjoyed its flowering in the sixteenth century.

In the Turkish- and Venetian-held areas of Greece, the continuation of Byzantine art, which was their blessed legacy, was effected on different terms, dictated by historical circumstances, in initially parallel and subsequently convergent modal directions, and always with identical aspirations. In each case the conservation of Byzantine tradition constituted a self-evident demand. The components of painting practice differed; not only those determined by the sources from which the iconographic exemplars were drawn and the basic stylistic trends in the regions under different occupation, but also by the others which projected the present with its diverse conditions, spiritual circumstances and, in particular, aesthetic demands. The old and the new views were interwoven with rhythms befitting the face of the contemporary world



and created the independent character of Post-Byzantine art.

Painters from Constantinople, as well as from the Peloponnese and elsewhere, had sought refuge in Venetian-occupied Crete from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Bringing with them models of the high art of the Capital, they raised the standard of Cretan painting, which was local in character, and signalled splendid developments in a milieu with favourable cultural and living conditions and with useful access to the art of the West; developments which, in the second half of the fifteenth century, brought Crete to the fore as a major artistic centre. But the painting activity in the workshops which sprung up in Candia (Herakleion) and other Cretan towns was almost exclusively concerned with the production of portable icons, while wall-paintings were neglected for lack of demand. The few examples known before the early sixteenth century bear witness to the refined and excellent technique of the icon.

The opposite was the case in mainland Greece. In unbroken tradition, the decoration of churches with wall-paintings constituted the principal field in the practice of painting. Despite the fact that, for a while, inimical conditions precluded the undertaking of ambitious projects, wall-paintings were never absent, and by the late fifteenth century there was a notable proliferation. A northern Greek atelier of painters was evidently the most important, probably from Kastoria, as the association with previous wall-paintings in the town indicates. Its members were active in the final decades of the fifteenth and in the early sixteenth century at Meteora, Kastoria and further north in Serbia, Bulgaria and perhaps Romania. The first dated (1483) and most significant decoration of this atelier, in the katholikon of the Great Meteoron, is a well-structured work with distilled ideas on composition and colour and cognizant of contemporary tendencies in the West. Alluring in its stylistic simplicity and lively decorative character, it aspires to saints of noble aspect, and expressive licence in the gospel scenes which unfold in a continuum, with dramatic movement, bright colours and all manner of appealing details giving realistic accuracy and vitality to the events.

Until the opening decades of the sixteenth century church decoration in general included the elements of pictorial and iconographic simplicity, with a certain variety in the modes and the iconographic preferences. The dissolution of Byzantium brought the depressing distance from the sappy creations of Palaiologan painting. At the same time, with new impetus and with a vitalizing opening up of tradition, as well as an eclectic appraisal of Western art which, modified, did not offend Orthodox sentiment, the Post-Byzantine theory of art was gradually devised and formulated. Around 1530 it bore its rich fruits in mainland Greece, with the timely contribution of Cretan and Helladic painters who here met and created the important representative works of the heyday of the sixteenth century.

In 1527, in the decoration of the small katholikon of the Ayios Nikolaos Anapafsas in the monastic community at Meteora, the Cretan painter and monk Theophanis Strelitzas Bathas, introduced, along with the iconography, the technique and style of the icons of Crete, which had evolved to a degree of perfection. Already in Anapafsas the outstanding iconographer shows in some figures his familiarity with the monumental scale wall-painting demands. This he brought to full development, in 1535, in the exceptional work of the katholikon of the Lavra Monastery on Mount Athos.

Probably in 1531/32, in the katholikon of Ayios Nikolaos Philanthropinon, in the smaller monastic community of the Island in the lake at Ioannina, an anonymous local painter embraced the teachings of advanced Cretan art brought by Theophanis and, directly or indirectly, perhaps by his predecessors too. With profound knowledge of local painting and that of the Kastoria atelier, and above all with generous recourse to the iconographic repertoire of Palaiologan painting, the Philanthropinon painter presented a veritable masterpiece, the first known work of Epirote art, formed with principles of Cretan artistic education.

Cretan and local Epirote painting, represented by these works respectively, shone bright in the firmament of church decoration, and up until the late six-



teenth century described their splendid orbit with numerous works on the Holy Mountain, on the Island of Ioannina and the Meteora, as well as in other monasteries and churches from Macedonia to Boeotia and from Epiros to Euboea. The outstanding personalities of the Cretan Theophanis and the Theban Frangos Katelanos dominated; and with the establishment of their work on Mount Athos they were to acquire great fame for posterity as leaders of their School, and Theophanis renown equal to Panselinos.

The two systems of painting, which acquired the dimensions of a School, are linked with the principles of a common artistic language of the era, and frequently with reconciliation in the particularities. However, in rhythmical tendencies, style and substantial points of the ideographic constitution of the iconographic programmes, they followed a different course, so projecting their Classical and correspond-

ingly anticlassical character more intensely. The wall-paintings of Theophanis and of his Cretan colleagues have eurhythmy, spirituality and serenity of Classical tone, and doctrinal decorum in the iconographic treatment. Those of Frangos Katelanos and his mainland counterparts have dynamic movement, narrative impulse and expressive immediacy, which tend towards anticlassical renditions, as in the katholikon of the Barlaam Monastery at Meteora, and a rich iconography of historical and didactic character which projects, in clear associations, the truth of the dogma. The beneficial influence of both Schools is obvious in the art of the painters who came after and, with the hegemonic status of the Patriarchate and the Athonite monasteries, in the more northerly regions of the Balkan Peninsula, where religious art developed with the contribution sometimes of Greek painters.

1. *The Emperor Justinian II (?) entering Thessaloniki in triumph, 7th cent. Thessaloniki, Ayios Demetrios.*









2. The Virgin Nikopoios, section,  
7th cent. Naxos, Moni, Panayia  
Drosiani.





3. An Archangel, section, 7th cent. Naxos, Moni, Panayia Drosiani.









4-5. 'Ayia Maria' and the Church as the 'Bride of Christ' (?), sections of the Deesis, 7th cent. Naxos, Moni, Panayia Drosiani.





6

6-7. *The Journey to Bethlehem and the Presentation of Christ in the Temple*,  
7th-8th cent. (?). Italy, Castelseprio, Santa Maria.









8. Joshua, detail of fig. 9.

9. Joshua with the Archangel Michael, section, 2nd half of the 10th cent.  
Monastery of Hosios Loukas, katholikon.



ΓΕΡΟΝΤΩΝΟΙ  
ΙΕΝΑΝΤΙΟΝ

ΙΣΟΤΟΥΝΑΥΗ

ΗΜΙΧΑΛΟΑΡΧΗ  
ΤΙΓΟΣΤΗΣΔΥΝΑΜΕ  
ΥΚΑΙΗΛΘΟΝΤΟΥ  
ΣΧΥΣΕΣΕ











10-11. The Encounter of Christ with St John the Baptist, 3rd quarter of the 11th cent. Monastery of Hosios Loukas, katholikon.









12. St Sergios, 3rd quarter of the 11th cent. Monastery of Hosios Loukas, katholikon.

13. St Nikitas, 3rd quarter of the 11th cent. Monastery of Hosios Loukas, katholikon.









15

14. The Entry into Jerusalem, 3rd quarter of the 11th cent. Monastery of Hosios Loukas, katholikon.

15. The Entombment of Christ and the Holy Women at the Tomb, 3rd quarter of the 11th cent. Monastery of Hosios Loukas, katholikon.





16



17

16-17. Saints George and Anikitos, 3rd quarter of the 11th cent. Monastery of Hosios Loukas, katholikon.

18-19. Saints Vikentios and Arethas, 3rd quarter of the 11th cent. Monastery of Hosios Loukas, katholikon.









20. Apostles and an angel, section of the Ascension, 1037-1056.  
Ohrid, Ayia Sophia.



21. Procession of Angels, section, 1037-1056. Ohrid, Ayia Sophia.

22. Christ ascending in glory, section of the Ascension, 1037-1056.  
Ohrid, Ayia Sophia.













24

23. Saints Leo, Gregory the Dialogos and Silvester, 1037-1056.  
Ohrid, Ayia Sophia.

24. The Communion of the Apostles, section, 1037-1056. Ohrid, Ayia Sophia.





25. *The Metalepsis, section of the Communion of the Apostles, 1105-1106. Cyprus, Panayia Asinou.*

26. *The Raising of Lazarus, 1105-1106. Cyprus, Panayia Asinou.*





→  
27. The Dormition of the Virgin, 1105-1106. Cyprus,  
Panayia Asinou.

















28. St Theodore the Stratilatis,  
after 1152. Thrace, Pherres,  
Panayia Kosmosotira.

29. St Merkourios, after 1152.  
Thrace, Pherres, Panayia  
Kosmosotira.









30. St Prokopios (?), after 1152. Thrace, Pherres, Panayia Kosmosotira.

31. St Theodore the Tyro, after 1152. Thrace, Pherres, Panayia Kosmosotira.

32. The hand of St Theodore holding the spear, and section of his shield, detail of fig. 31.





33



34

33-35. The infant Christ in the crib, with the animals; the infant's bath; Joseph in contemplation, sections of the Nativity, c.1160. Thessaloniki, Monastery of Hosios David, katholikon.













37

36. *The Descent from the Cross*, 1164. Nerezi, Ayios Panteleimon.

37. *The Entombment of Christ*, 1164. Nerezi, Ayios Panteleimon.





38. The Apostles John and James, section of the Transfiguration, 1164.  
Nerezi, Ayios Panteleimon.









39



40

39-40. Nikephoros Kasnitzi and his wife Anna, sections of the dedicatory scene, 1160-1180. Kastoria, Ayios Nikolaos Kasnitzi.

41. The Transfiguration, 1160-1180. Kastoria, Ayios Nikolaos Kasnitzi.













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42. St Nestor, section, 1160-1180. Kastoria, Ayios Nikolaos Kasnitzi.

43. The Dormition of the Virgin, 1160-1180. Kastoria, Ayios Nikolaos Kasnitzi.





44. An archangel, section of the *Virgin Enthroned with Archangels*, c.1180. Kastoria, Ayioi Anargyroi.



45. *The Entombment of Christ*, c.1180. Kastoria, Ayioi Anargyroi.









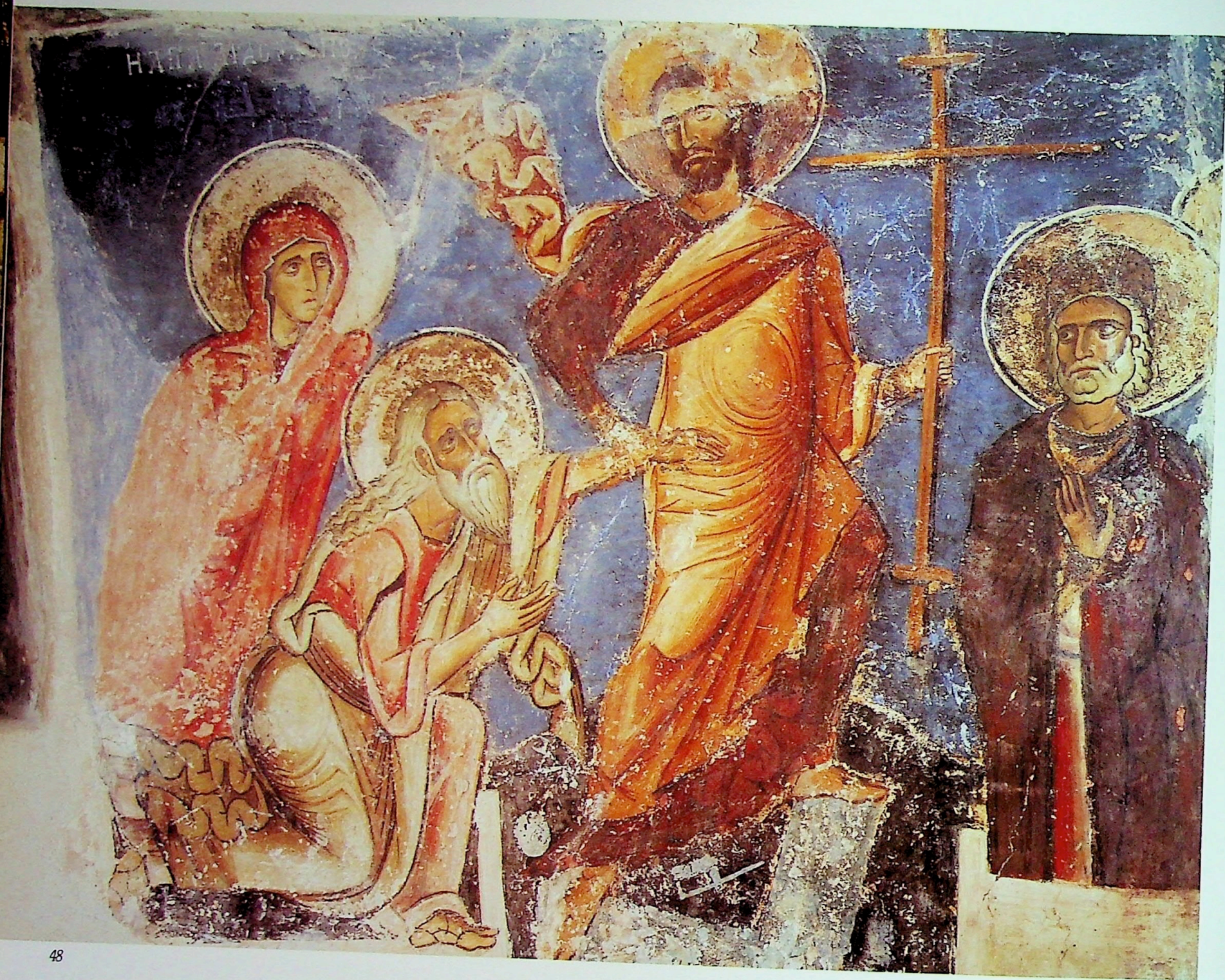




46. Saints George and Demetrios, c.1180. Kastoria, Ayioi Anargyroi.

47. St Demetrios, detail of fig. 46.









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48. Theodoros Apseudes, the Anastasis, section, 1183. Cyprus, Paphos, Enkleistra of Ayios Neophytos.

49. Theodoros Apseudes, figures of apostles, section of the Ascension, 1183. Cyprus, Paphos, Enkleistra of Ayios Neophytos.









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50. An archangel, section of the Enthroned Virgin with Archangels, late 12th cent. Patmos, Monastery of St John the Theologian, chapel of the Panayia.

51. The Hospitality of Abraham (Holy Trinity), late 12th cent. Patmos, Monastery of St John the Theologian, chapel of the Panayia.

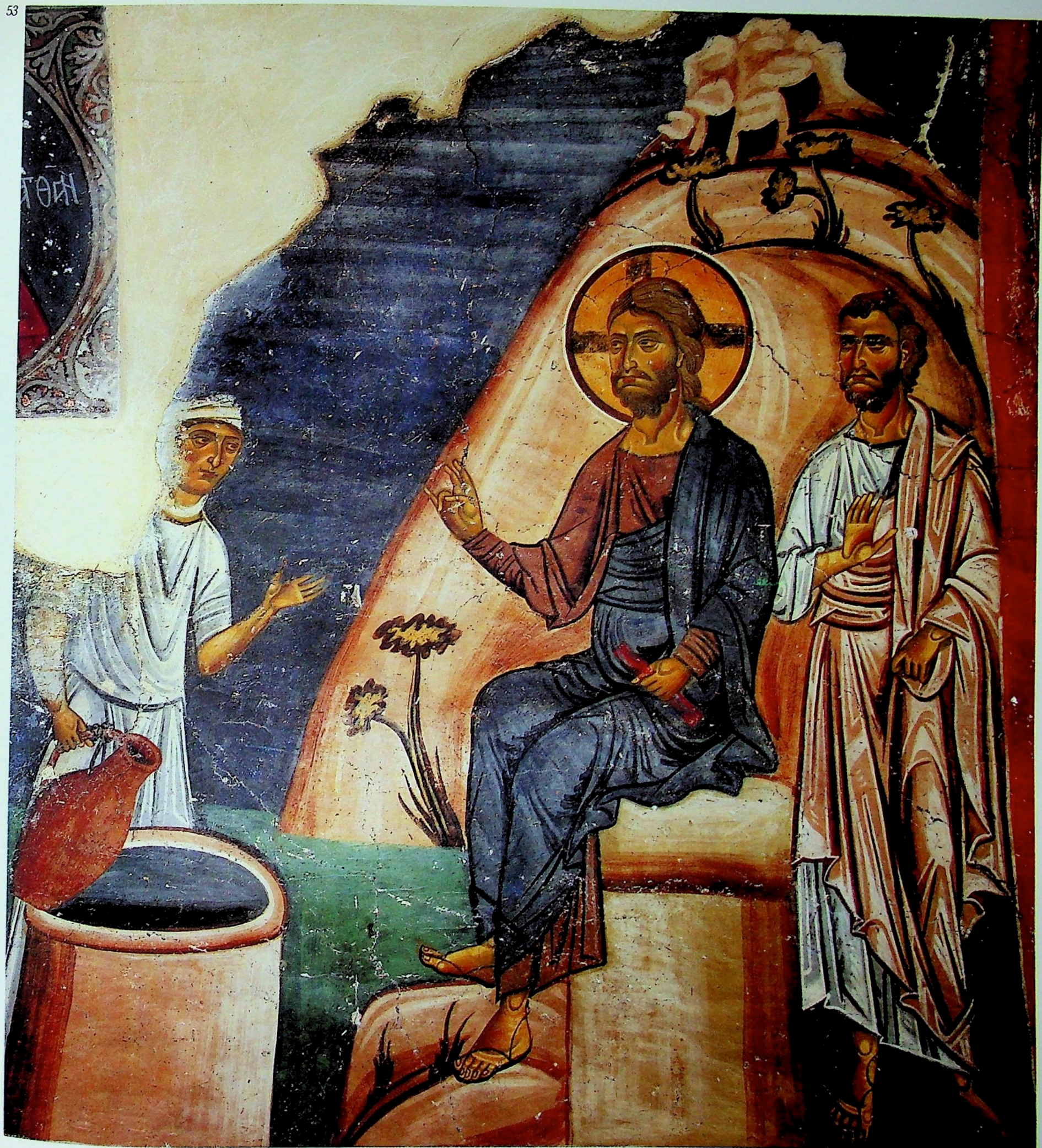




52. St James the Brother of the Lord, section, late 12th cent. Patmos, Monastery of St John the Theologian, chapel of the Panayia.

53. Christ and the Samaritan Woman, late 12th cent. Patmos, Monastery of St John the Theologian, chapel of the Panayia.













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54. A Hierarch of Jerusalem, section, late 12th cent. Patmos, Monastery of St John the Theologian, chapel of the Panayia.

55-56. Saints Hilarion and Chariton, late 12th cent. Patmos, Monastery of St John the Theologian, refectory.





57. An archangel, section of the  
Enthroned Virgin with Archangels,  
1191. Kurbinovo, Ayios Georgios.

58. The Anastasis, section, 1191.  
Kurbinovo, Ayios Georgios.













59. The Archangel Gabriel, section  
of the Annunciation, 1191.  
Kurbino, Ayios Georgios.

60. The Embracing of Mary and Elisabeth,  
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61. The Enthroned Virgin and Child with Archangels and Medallions of Hierarchs, 1192. Cyprus, Lagoudera, Panayia Arakou.

62. The Enthroned Virgin and Child, detail of fig. 61.













63. Christ Pantokrator with Angels and Prophets, 1192.  
Cyprus, Lagoudera, Panayia Arakou.

64. Christ Pantokrator, detail of fig. 63.









65. The Nativity, 1192. Cyprus, Lagoudera, Panayia Arakou.

66. The Ascension, section, 1192. Cyprus, Lagoudera, Panayia Arakou.





67. Apostles and an angel, section of the Ascension, 1192.  
Cyprus, Lagoudera, Panayia Arakou.

68. The right group of the apostles, detail of fig. 67.













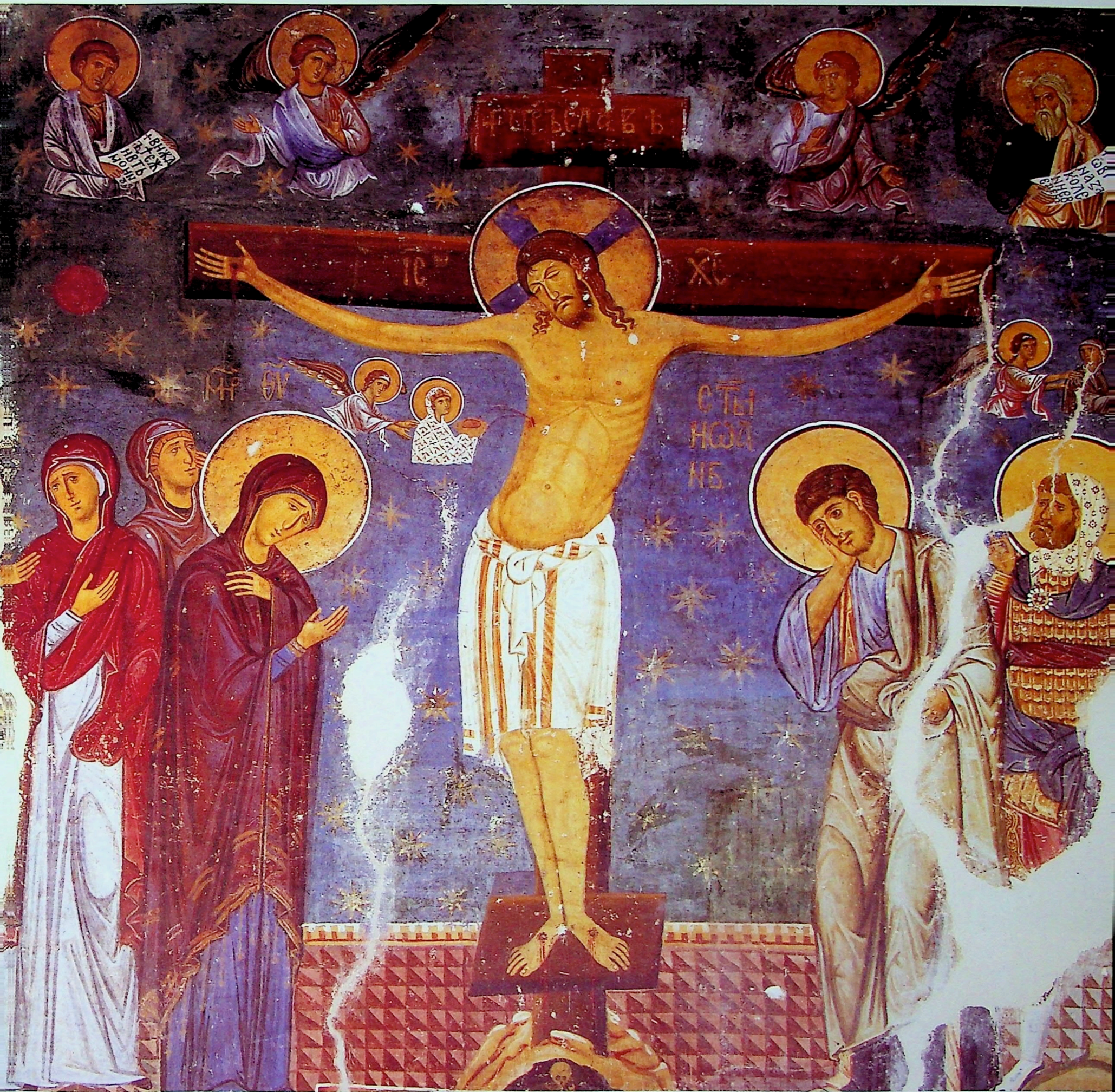




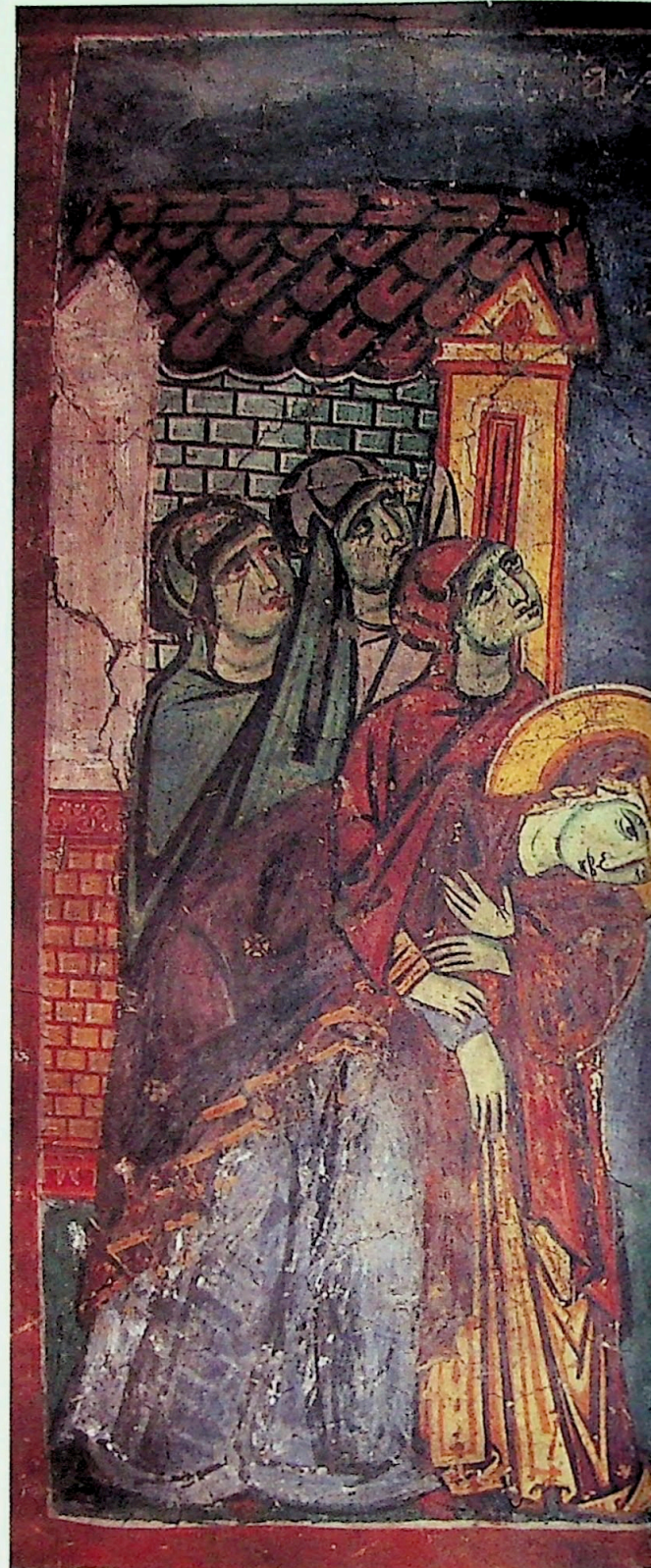
71. Nikolaos, St John the Baptist, section, 1208/9. Studenica Monastery, katholikon.

72. Nikolaos, the Crucifixion, 1208/9. Studenica Monastery, katholikon.





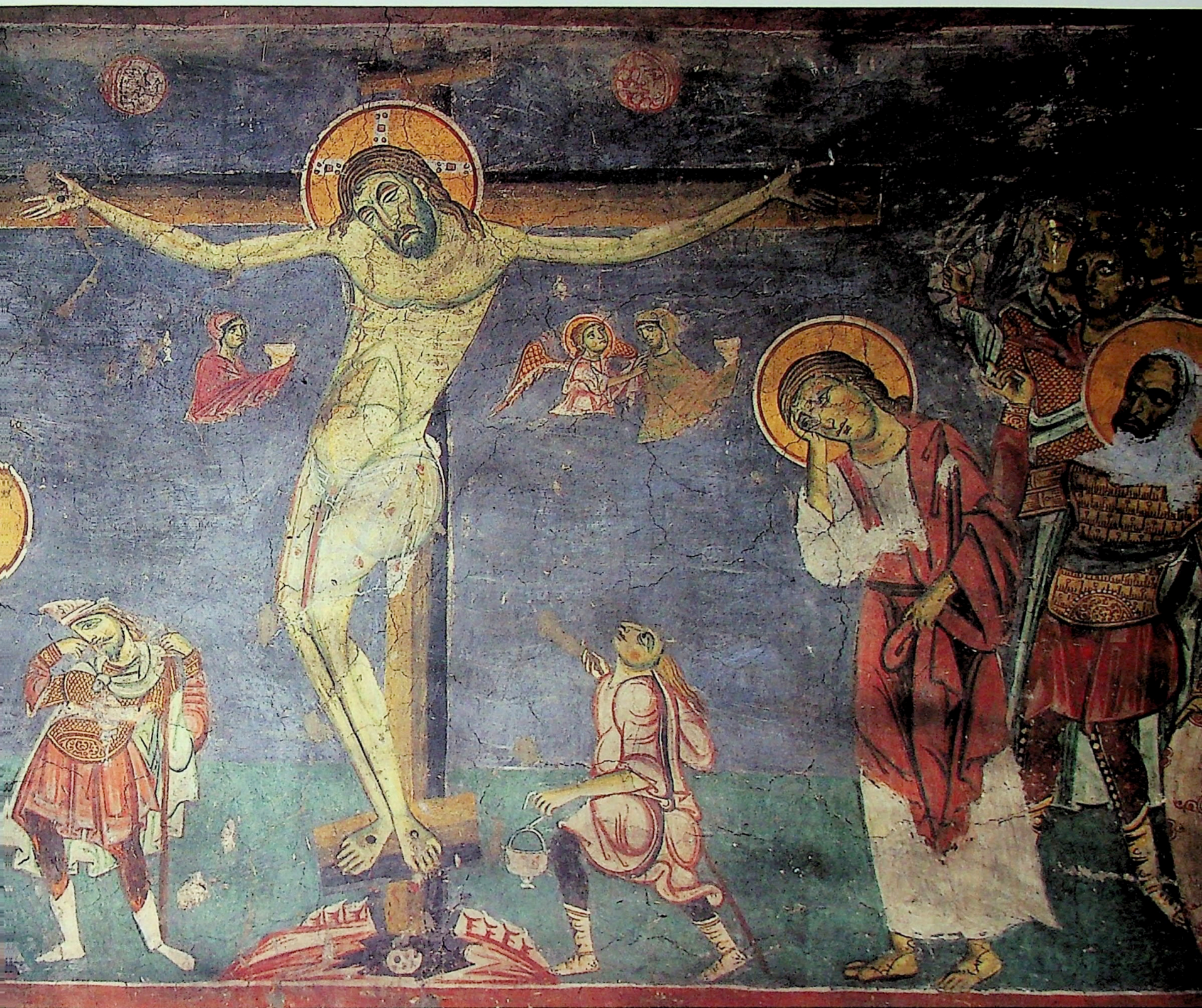




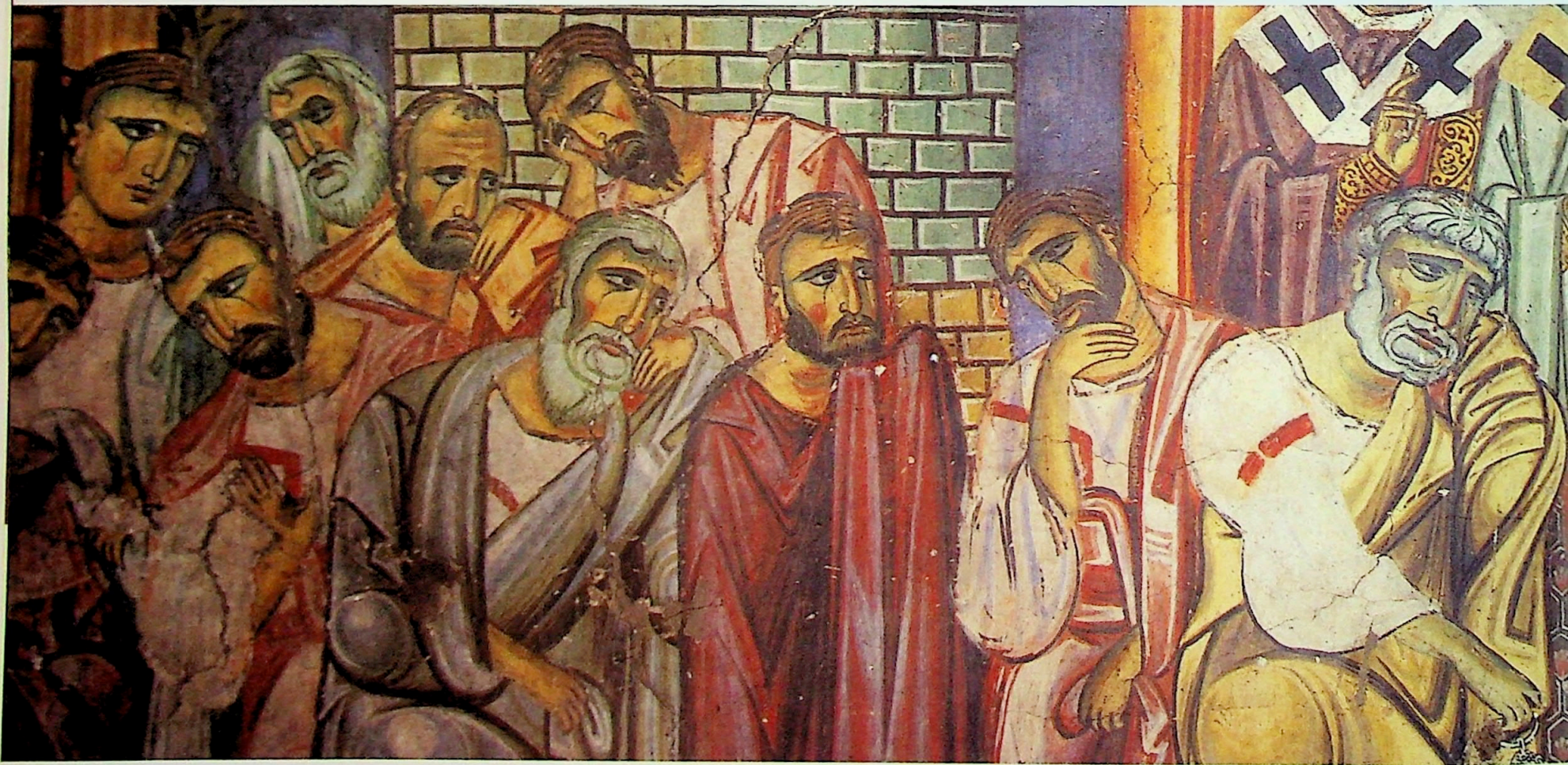
73. The centurion, detail of fig. 74.

74. The Crucifixion, first decades of the 13th cent. Kastoria, Panayia Mavriotissa.









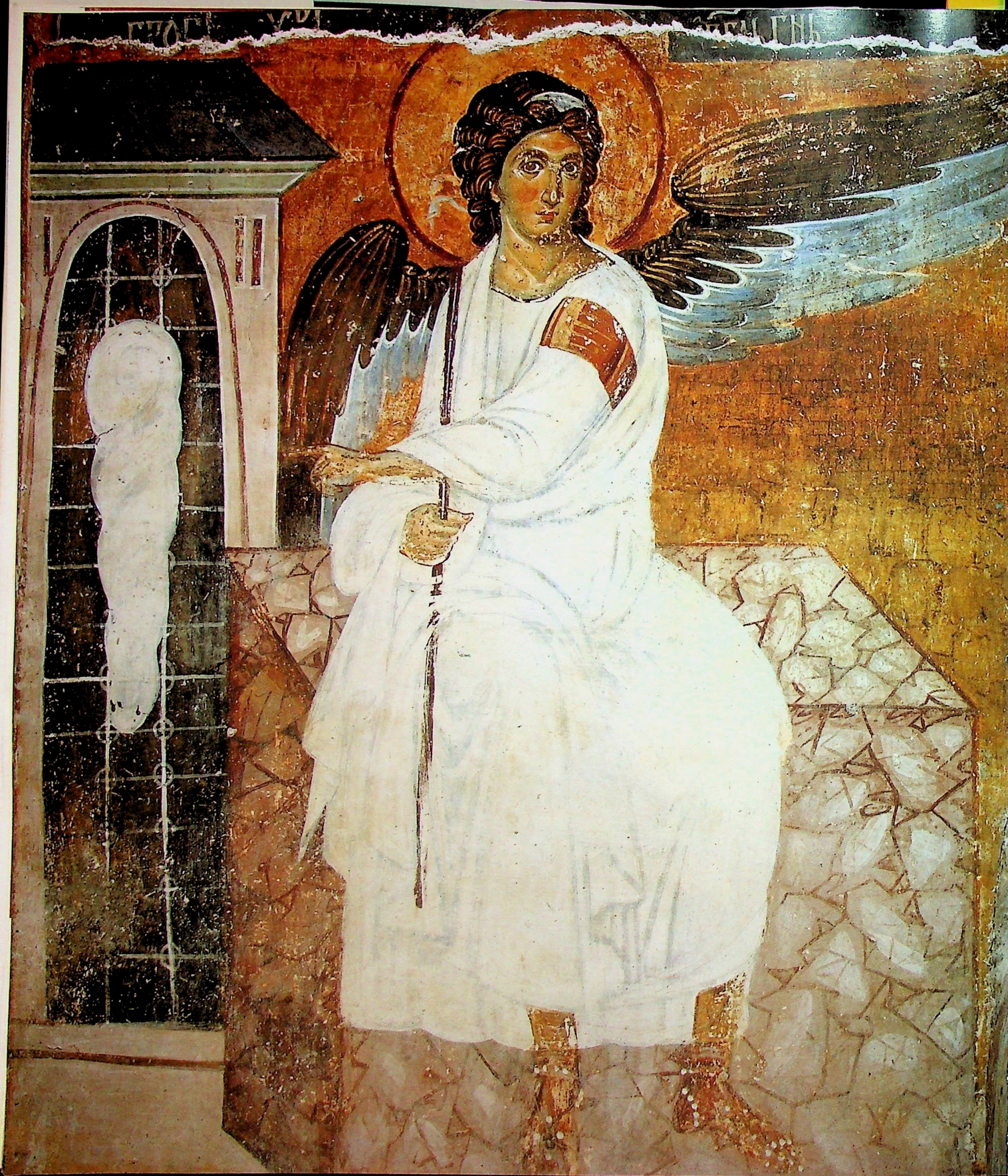




75. The Dormition of the Virgin,  
section, first decades of the 13th cent.  
Kastoria, Panayia Mavriotissa.

76-77. The group of apostles;  
the host of angels, sections of the  
Dormition of the Virgin, first  
decades of the 13th cent.  
Kastoria, Panayia Mavriotissa.









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78. The angel, section of the Holy Women at the Tomb, 1222-1228.  
Mileseva Monastery, katholikon.

79. The Virgin, section of the Annunciation, 1222-1228.  
Mileseva Monastery, katholikon.

80. Group of apostles, section of the Dormition of the Virgin, 1222-1228.  
Mileseva Monastery, katholikon.





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81. The resurrected Christ, section of the Chairete, c.1250. Arta, Vlacherna Monastery, katholikon.

82. The Incredulity of Thomas, c.1250. Arta, Vlacherna Monastery, katholikon.

83. The Judgement of Pilate, c.1250. Arta, Vlacherna Monastery, katholikon.





ΕΙΔΗΛΑΤΗ ΙΑΥ  
ΑΠΟΦΑΣΕΩΣ ΠΑΚΚ  
ΑΔΙΚΩΝ

ΧΣ





81

83



82

81. The resurrected Christ, section of the Chairete, c.1250. Arta, Vlacherna Monastery, katholikon.

82. The Incredulity of Thomas, c.1250. Arta, Vlacherna Monastery, katholikon.

83. The Judgement of Pilate, c.1250. Arta, Vlacherna Monastery, katholikon.





ΕΙΔΗΕΑΙ ΤΗ ΙΑΙ  
ΑΠΟΦΑΣΕΩΣ ΠΑΚΕ  
ΑΔΙΚΩΝ









84-85. The Apostle Paul; an archangel,  
sections of the Ascension, 1230-1240.  
Peć, Ayioi Apostoloi.









84-85. The Apostle Paul; an archangel,  
sections of the Ascension, 1230-1240.  
Peć, Ayioi Apostoloi.









86

86-87. An angel upholding Christ's glory; the Virgin Orans, sections of the Ascension, 1230-1240. Peć, Ayioi Apostoloi.









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88. Concelebrating hierarchs, section of the Melismos, c.1260-1265. Sopoćani, Ayia Triada.

89. A Holy Martyr, c.1260-1265. Sopoćani, Ayia Triada.



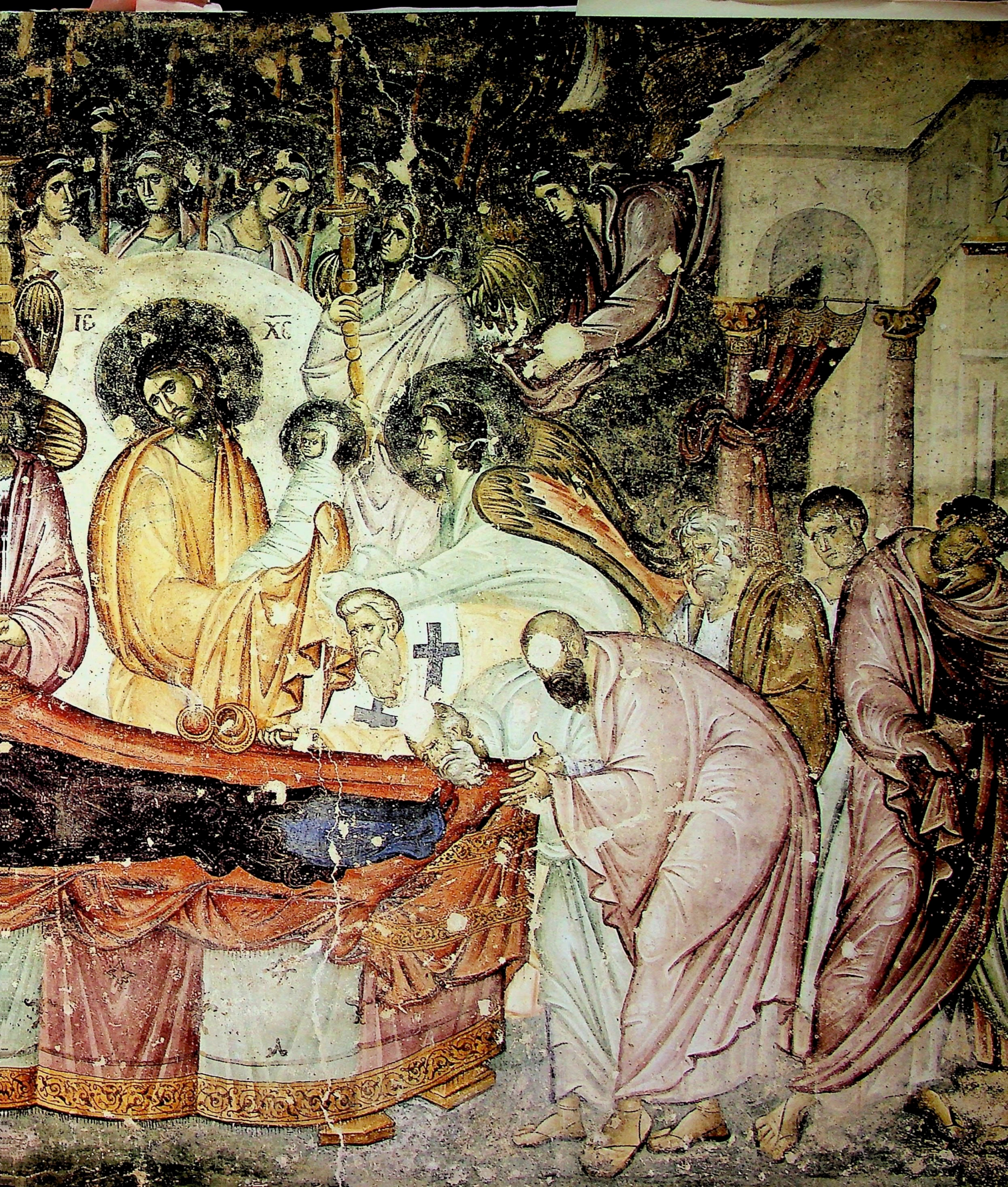






90. *The Dormition of the Virgin*,  
section, c.1260-1265.  
Sopoćani, Ayia Triada.













91. *The Preparation of the Throne*, 1270-1285. Mystras, Metropolis.

92. 'Angels', 'Powers', and 'Authorities', section of *Christ King of Glory*, 1270-1285. Mystras, Metropolis.





93. An angel reading from the Book of Life, section of the Last Judgment, 1291/92-1315. Mystras, Metropolis.

94-95. The Martyrdom of St Demetrios; Miracle of Saints Cosmas and Damian, 1291/92-1315. Mystras, Metropolis.



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96. Manuel Panselinos, the Enthroned Virgin and Child, section, c.1290. Mount Athos, Protaton.

97. The Virgin, detail of fig. 96.





98. Christ, detail of fig. 99.

99. Manuel Panselinos, *Christ Enthroned*, c.1290.  
Mount Athos, Protaton.













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100. St John the Baptist and Christ,  
and the personification of the Jordan  
(bottom), detail of fig. 101.

101. Manuel Panselinos, the Baptism,  
c.1290. Mount Athos, Protaton.

102. Venerating angels, detail of fig. 101.





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103. Manuel Panselinos, the Anastasis and the Appearance of Christ to the Disciples, c.1290. Mount Athos, Protaton.

104. Adam and Eve, St John the Baptist and Abel, detail of fig. 103.









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105. Manuel Panselinos, *the Presentation of the Virgin*, c.1290.  
Mount Athos, Protaton.

106. *The daughters of the Hebrews with the infant Mary*,  
detail of fig. 105.









107. Manuel Panselinos, *St Theodore the Stratilatis*, section, c.1290. Mount Athos, Protaton.



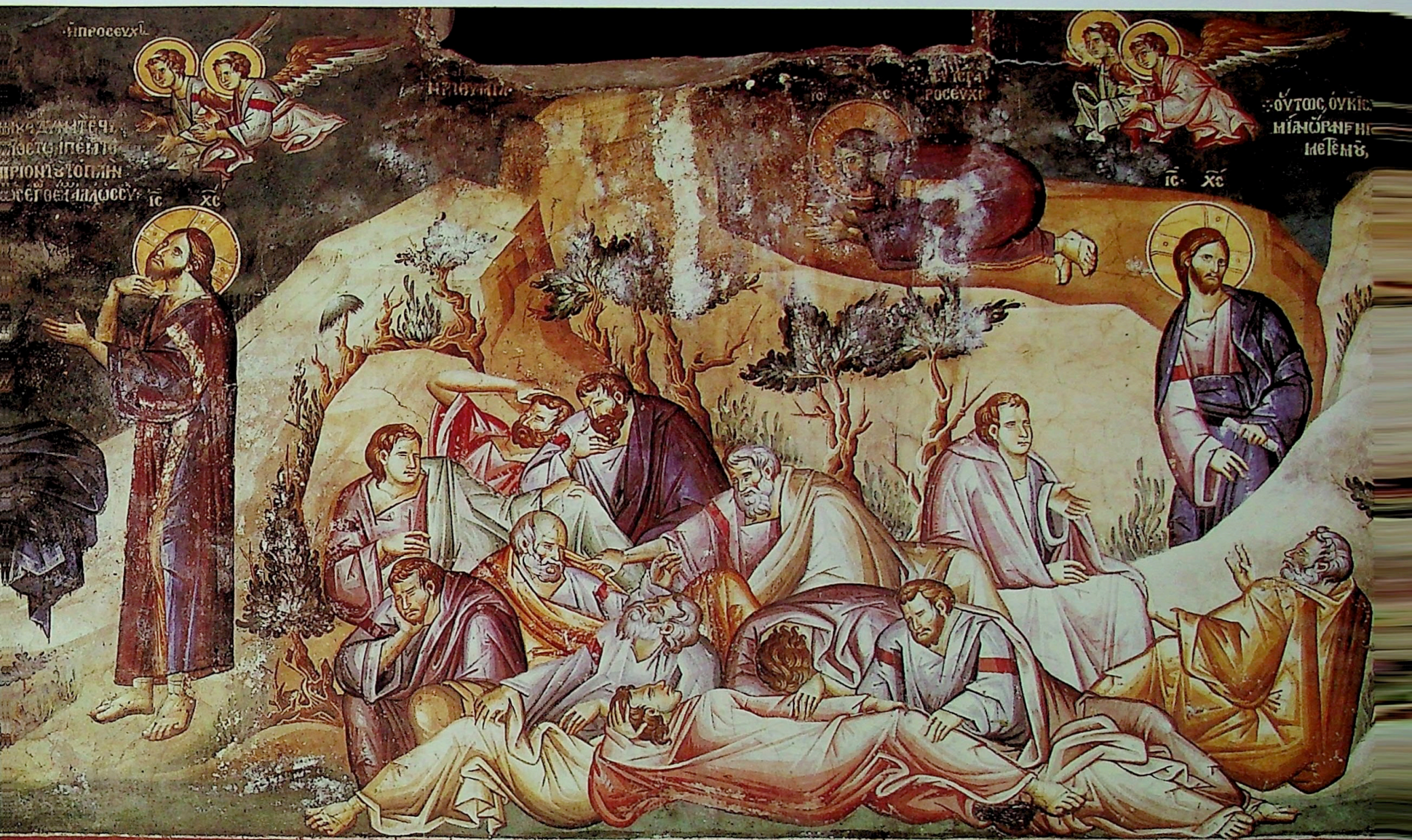


108. Manuel Panselinos, *St Theodore the Tyro*, section, c.1290. Mount Athos, Protaton.









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109. Michael Astrapas and Eutychios, the Dormition of the Virgin, section, 1294/95. Ohrid, St Clement (Peribleptos).

110. Michael Astrapas and Eutychios, the Prayer in Gethsemane, 1294/95. Ohrid, St Clement (Peribleptos).





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111. Michael Astrapas and Eutychios, *Jacob's Ladder and his Struggle with the Angel*, section, 1294/95. Ohrid, St Clement (Peribleptos).

112. Michael Astrapas and Eutychios, *the Archangel Gabriel*, section, 1294/95. Ohrid, St Clement (Peribleptos).









113. St Prokopios, detail  
of fig. 114.

114. Saints Prokopios and Nestor,  
section, late 13th cent.  
Elasson, Monastery of the Panayia  
Olympiotissa, katholikon.









115. St Azarias, late 13th cent. Ellasson, Monastery of the Panayia Olympiotissa, katholikon.



116. St Peter the Athonite, section, late 13th cent. Ellasson, Monastery of the Panayia Olympiotissa, katholikon.

117. The Prophet Elisha, section, late 13th cent. Ellasson, Monastery of the Panayia Olympiotissa, katholikon.

118. The Embracing of Joachim and Anne, late 13th cent. Ellasson, Monastery of the Panayia Olympiotissa, katholikon.









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119. *The Presentation of the Virgin, 1313-1314. Studenica Monastery, church of Saints Joachim and Anne.*

120. *The apostles verifying the Metastasis, section of the Dormition of the Virgin, 1313-1314. Studenica Monastery, church of Saints Joachim and Anne.*













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121. Georgios Kalliergis, the Anastasis, 1315. Veroia, church of Christ.

122. Georgios Kalliergis, the Prophet Malachi, 1315. Veroia, church of Christ.





123. A maid presents the new-born John to his father, section of the Birth of St John the Baptist, 1310-1320. Thessaloniki, Ayioi Apostoloi, chapel of St John the Baptist.





124. A mid-wife, with the infant on her lap, prepares his bath, section of the Birth of St John the Baptist, 1310-1320. Thessaloniki, Ayioi Apostoloi, chapel of St John the Baptist.









125-126. Herod and his fellow feasters; the dance of Salome, sections of Herod's Banquet, 1310-1320. Thessaloniki, Ayioi Apostoloi, chapel of St John the Baptist.





127. *The Anastasis*, 1315-1320.  
Constantinople, Chora Monastery,  
chapel.





ΗΑΝΑΤΑCIC

ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ





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128. The angel 'who revolves the sky', detail of fig. 129.

129. The Last Judgement, section, 1315-1320. Constantinople, Chora Monastery, chapel.













130. St Prokopios, 1315-1320.  
Constantinople, Chora Monastery,  
chapel.

131. The Virgin of Tenderness,  
1315-1320. Constantinople, Chora  
Monastery, chapel.

132. St Prokopios, detail  
of fig. 130.





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133. Archangels, section of the Virgin with Archangels, 1315-1320. Constantinople, Chora Monastery, chapel.

134. Christ and the Samaritan Woman, and the Wedding at Cana, 1312-1322. Mystras, Hodegetria.

135. The Healing of the Blind Man and the Healing of Peter's Mother-in-law, 1312-1322. Mystras, Hodegetria.









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136. An angel, section of Christ in Glory, 1312-1322. Mystras, Hodegetria.

137. A Host of Martyrs, section, 1312-1322. Mystras, Hodegetria.

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138. St Gregory of Great Armenia, 1312-1322.  
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139. The Metalepsis, section of the Communion  
of the Apostles, 1310-1320. Thessaloniki,  
Ayios Nikolaos Orphanos.













140. The Betrayal, section, 1310-1320. Thessaloniki, Ayios Nikolaos Orphanos.

141. The Washing of the Feet, 1310-1320. Thessaloniki, Ayios Nikolaos Orphanos.

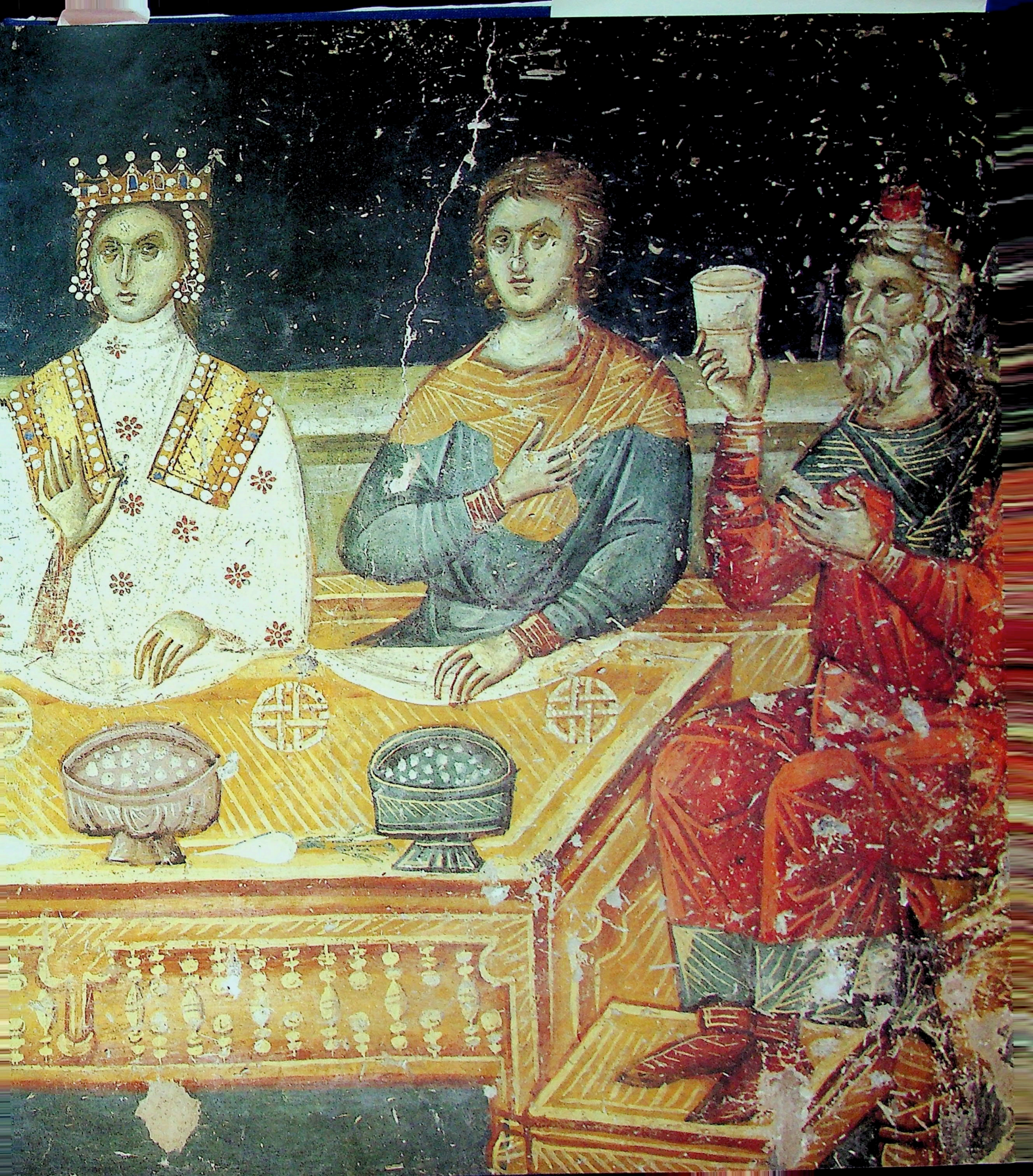
→  
142. The Wedding at Cana, 1310-1320. Thessaloniki, Ayios Nikolaos Orphanos.



Ὁ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΚΑΙ Η ΓΑΜΟΣ











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143. *The Miracles of St Nicholas at Sea*, 1310-1320. Thessaloniki, Ayios Nikolaos Orphanos.

144. *The Samaritan woman*, section of *Christ and the Samaritan Woman*, 1310-1320. Thessaloniki, Ayios Nikolaos Orphanos.









145. Michael Astrapas and Eutychios,  
the Apostle Peter, section, 1317-1318.  
Staro Nagoricino, Ayios Georgios.

146. Michael Astrapas and Eutychios,  
St James the Persian, section, 1317-1318.  
Staro Nagoricino, Ayios Georgios.













147. *The Birth of the Virgin*, 1318-1320. Mount Athos, Chelandari Monastery, katholikon.

148. *The Presentation of the Virgin*, 1318-1320. Mount Athos, Chelandari Monastery, katholikon.









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149. Saints Demetrios, Prokopios and Eustathios, 1318-1320.  
Mount Athos, Chelandari Monastery, katholikon.

150. Peter's Denial and Pilate's Washing of the Hands,  
1st half of the 14th cent. Pec, Ayioi Apostoloi.









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151. *The Nativity*, c.1360-1370. Mystras, Peribleptos.

152. *The Baptism*, c.1360-1370. Mystras, Peribleptos.





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153. *The Dormition of the Virgin*, c.1360-1370. Mystras, Peribleptos.

154. *The angels of the Great Entry*, section of the Divine Liturgy, c.1360-1370. Mystras, Peribleptos.









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155. The Nativity, c.1428. Mystras, Monastery of the Pantanassa, katholikon.

156. The Entry into Jerusalem, c.1428. Mystras, Monastery of the Pantanassa, katholikon.









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157. *The Ascension*, section, c.1428. Mystras, Monastery of the Pantanassa, katholikon.

158. *The Apostle Peter*, detail of fig. 157.





159. The Archangel Michael, 1483. Meteora, Monastery of the Great Meteoron, katholikon.

160. The Deesis, section, 1483. Meteora, Monastery of the Great Meteoron, katholikon.









161. *The Crucifixion, 1483. Meteora, Monastery of the Great Meteoron, katholikon.*





162. The Anastasis, 1483. Meteora, Monastery of the Great Meteoron, katholikon.







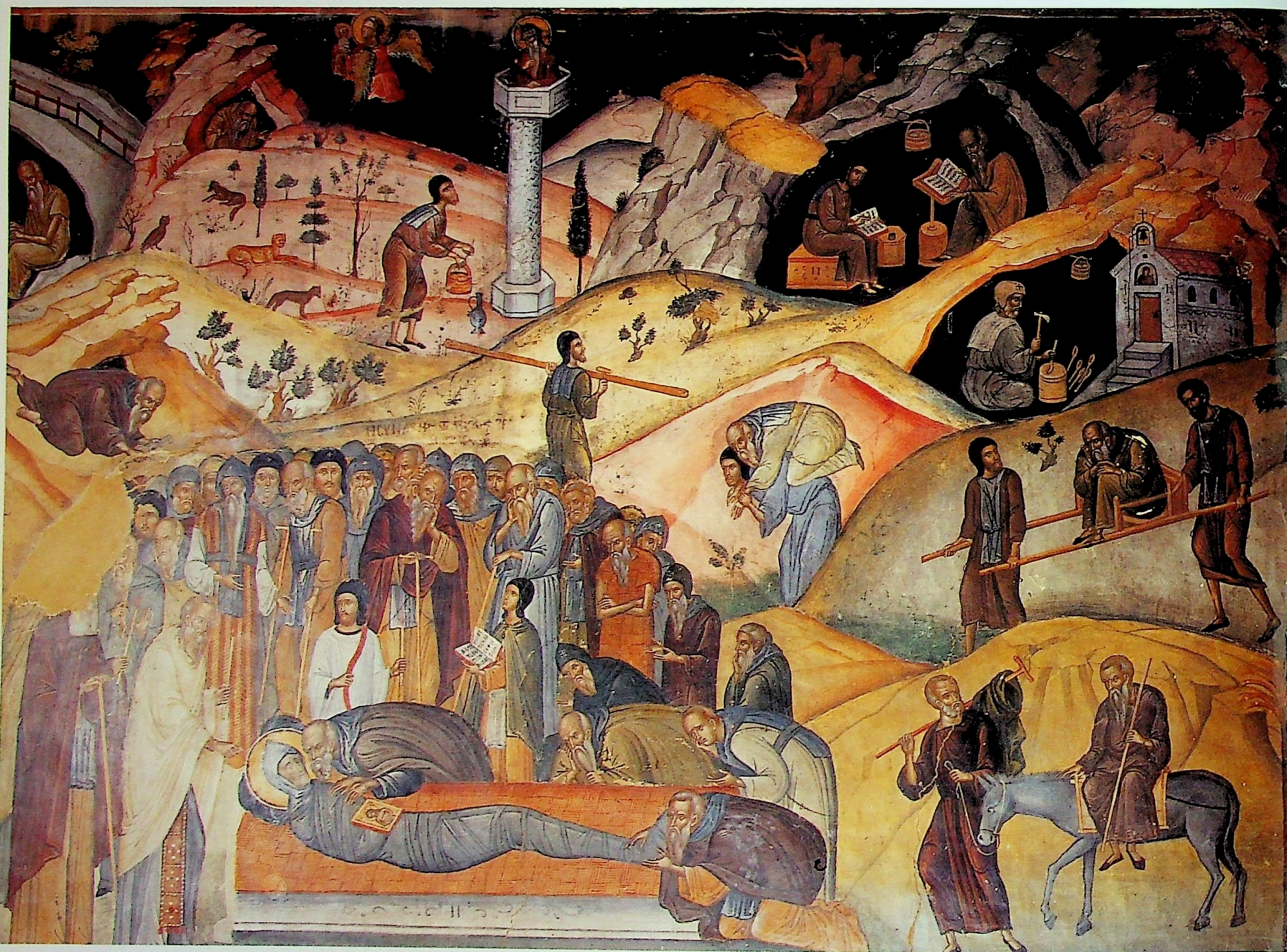


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163-164. Theophanis Strelitzas Bathas, Saints James the Persian and Christopher, 1527. Meteora, Monastery of Ayios Nikolaos Anapafsas, katholikon.

165. St James the Persian, detail of fig. 163.









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166. Theophanis Strelitzas Bathas, the Dormition of Hosios Ephraim the Syrian, 1527. Meteora, Monastery of Ayios Nikolaos Anapafsas, katholikon.

167. A monk giving the last kiss to the body of Hosios Ephraim, detail of fig. 166.

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172. The Feeding of the Five Thousand, 1531/32 (?). The Island of Ioannina, Philanthropinon Monastery, katholikon.

173. The Road to Calvary, 1531/32 (?). The Island of Ioannina, Philanthropinon Monastery, katholikon.





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174. The Betrayal, 1531/32 (?). The Island of Ioannina, Philanthropinon Monastery, katholikon.

175. The Judgement of Pilate, 1531/32 (?). The Island of Ioannina, Philanthropinon Monastery, katholikon.





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→  
176. Theophanis Strelitzas Bathas, *The Carrying of the Ark of the Covenant*, 1546. Mount Athos, Stavronikita Monastery, katholikon.

















177. Theophanis Strelitzas Bathas, an Angel of the Lord, section, 1546. Mount Athos, Stavronikita Monastery, katholikon.

178. Theophanis Strelitzas Bathas, Saints George and Demetrios, 1546. Mount Athos, Stavronikita Monastery, katholikon.





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179. Theophanis Strelitzas Bathas, the Deesis, 1546.  
Mount Athos, Stavronikita Monastery, katholikon.

180. The Nativity, 1548. Meteora, Barlaam Monastery,  
katholikon.







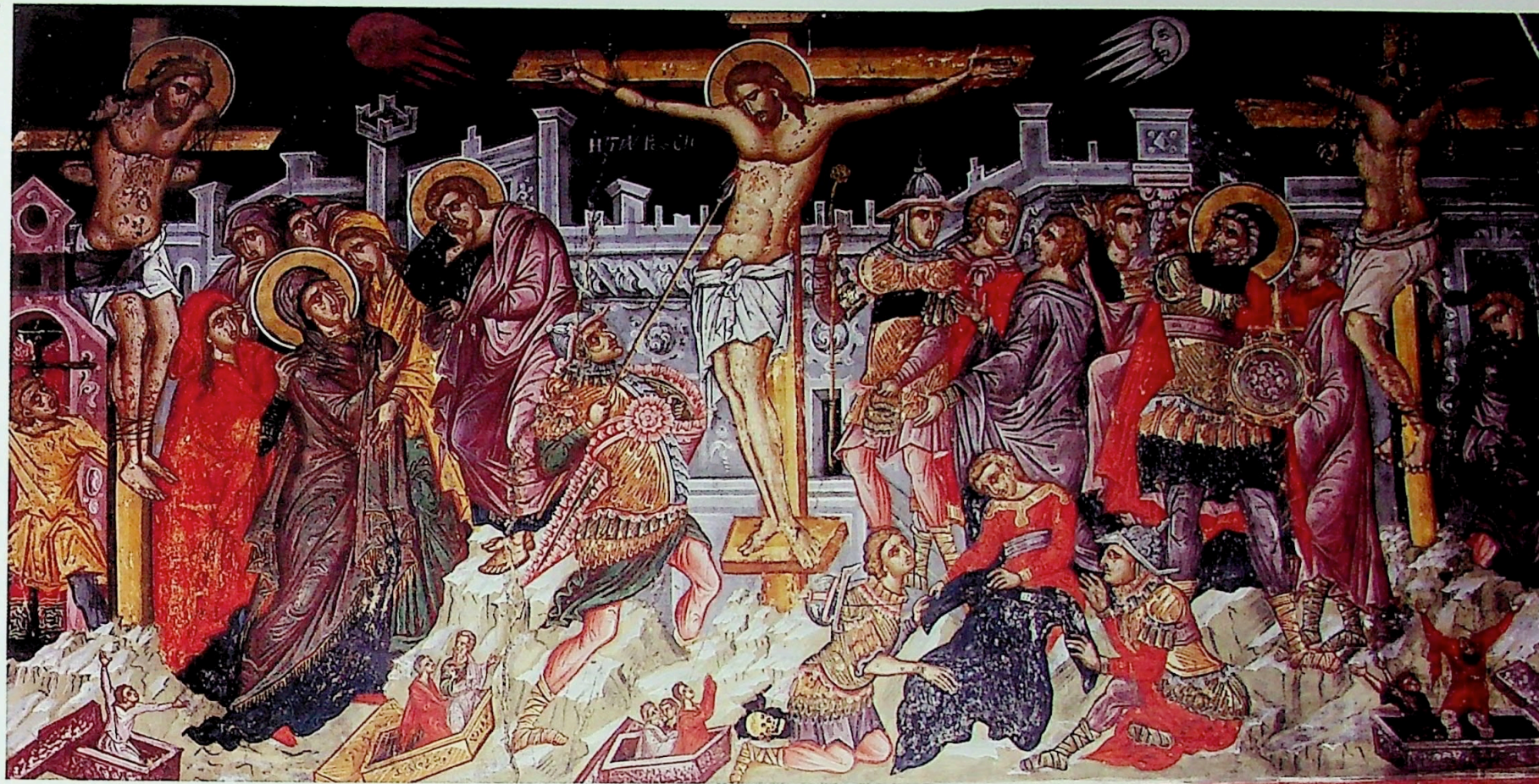


181. *The Betrayal*, 1548. Meteora, Barlaam Monastery, katholikon.

182. *The Crucifixion*, 1548. Meteora, Barlaam Monastery, katholikon.

183. *The dividing of the robes*, detail of fig. 182.









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184. The Dormition of the Virgin, 1548. Meteora, Barlaam Monastery, katholikon.

185. St Theodore the Tyro and the Archangel Michael, 1548, Meteora, Barlaam Monastery, katholikon.

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186. *The Road to Calvary, section, 1552. Meteora, Monastery of the Great Meteoron, katholikon.*

187. *The Wedding at Cana, 1552. Meteora, Monastery of the Great Meteoron, katholikon.*



ΟΕΝΚΑΝΑ ΓΑΜΟΣ











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188. Plutarch, section of the Greek Philosophers, 1560.  
The Island of Ioannina, Philanthropinon Monastery, katholikon.

189. Aristotle, section of the Greek Philosophers, 1560.  
The Island of Ioannina, Philanthropinon Monastery, katholikon.





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190. St Nicholas, the patron saint of the Philanthropinon Monastery, in Supplication to Christ on Behalf of its Founders, c.1550. The Island of Ioannina, Philanthropinon Monastery, katholikon.



## DESCRIPTION AND COMMENTARY

*1. Historical representation, 7th cent.  
Thessaloniki, Ayios Demetrios (nave, south wall).*

Preserved in fragmentary condition on the south wall of the nave is a large wall-painting, divided in two by a later opening. Depicted left is the triumphal entry of a haloed emperor into the burning city of Thessaloniki, with a retinue of pedestrian and equestrian companions. The young men in the van march briskly, in step with the sedate canter, appropriate to a parade, of the monarch's white mount. Behind are figures on horseback, followed by infantrymen in the rear. A wall in the background, and the gable-roofed edicules at the top in parallel arrangement, embellished with representations and an illegible inscription, perhaps belong to the stadium. At the left end of the wall a vertical painted inscription, now lost, possibly read 'Θεσσαλονίκη' (Thessaloniki). On the right of the painting is a longitudinal view of the interior of a large church, part of its roof consumed by flames. This is 'Ἡ Ἁγία Ἐκκλησία ἡ ἐν τῷ σταδίῳ' (the Holy Church within the stadium), according to the inscription, which is identified as Ayios Demetrios. The crowd visible in the gallery – many women in prayer – is pursued by the invaders behind, shield-bearing soldiers. At the right, lower down, a soldier rushes forward thrusting his spear, while at the left, in front of the sanctuary, an angel of the Lord descends to save his people. It is generally believed that the emperor depicted is Justinian II, entering Thessaloniki in triumph after the battle of Kleisoura in 688-689, where he survived an ambush by the Slavs and then stemmed their advance. The manner of painting, with its nerve and vitality in line and colour, its Hellenizing character, foreshortened perspective and narrative immediacy all point to a seventh-century date. This is corroborated by the egg-and-dart pattern on the bands framing this rare work, which is exactly the

same as the pattern framing the other representations on the south side, which also date from this century, as well as by epigraphic evidence.

Sotiriou 1952, 207ff. Xyngopoulos 1970, 56ff.

*2. The Virgin Nikopoios, 7th cent.  
Naxos, Moni, Panayia Drosiani (north conch).*

The small, domed triconch church of Drosiani, in the cemetery of the village of Moni, was perhaps originally a mausoleum, to which a long extension at the west and three Byzantine chapels facing its north side were later added. The Virgin, depicted waist-length and in frontal pose, in the so-called Nikopoios type, holding before her the Christ Child within a circular mandorla, reigns supreme in the semi-dome of the north conch by virtue of her size and beauty. She is flanked left and right by the doctor saints Cosmas and Damian, in circular medallions on the off-white ground. A majuscule inscription on the narrow face refers to the anonymous supplication of those who commissioned the painting of the conch. The condition of the wall-painting permitted only partial cleaning of the Virgin and the bust of Christ Emmanuel. At the level of the Child's head, the word 'ΦΩC' (Light) is probably inscribed on the cross, which spreads to the transcendental radiance that surrounds it, forming an aureole. The Virgin's perfectly shaped face is framed and enhanced by a dark-coloured headdress falling on the brow, and a deep purple maphorion with cruciform ornament on the top of the head. Her lovely neck remains exposed. Exquisitely rendered on her nacreous visage are the features of a true belle: enormous almond eyes with bluish whites heightening the profundity of her gaze, arched eyebrows following the line of the eyes and narrowing in curvature at the ends, a long straight nose and a small sweet



mouth. Dignified and noble as a patrician, the Drosiani Virgin is without doubt one of the loveliest figures produced by the art of the age.

Drandakis 1988, 19ff., 49, 73ff.

### 3. *An Archangel, 7th cent.*

*Naxos, Moni, Panayia Drosiani (east arch).*

On the intrados of the east arch are two full-length, confronted archangels, depicted *en face* and standing on a footstool, against the pale ochre ground. Both hold a sceptre in the right hand and an orb in the left. The archangel at the right is better preserved. He wears a chiton with ample folds, girdled at the waist with a narrow, bejewelled belt, and a cloak, fastened at the throat at the left and covering the right side of the chest. The luxurious attire is embellished with rows of pearls on the round appliqués and elsewhere. The emissary from heaven is svelte and mobile, comely in the ancient manner, with gently rounded shoulders. The precious sceptre lies diagonally across his breast and his strong wings converge above in a rhythmical arc around the broad halo. In formal pose, within the confines of the narrow surface, he is a noble, steadfast and graceful presence. The pretty face, one of the loveliest in the church – despite damage to the colour of the pupil, which mars the gaze – is framed by rich, wavy tresses, adorned with a white ribbon from which curls escape, blowing out below. The fine outline follows the *coiffure*, heightening the impression of freedom of movement, as in the apostle Andrew in Santa Maria Antiqua at Rome, of early eighth-century date. The modelling is bold in its juxtaposition of reds, yet smooth, and the ethos serious and decorous.

Drandakis 1988, 68ff.

### 4-5. *The Deesis, 7th cent.*

*Naxos, Moni, Panayia Drosiani (north conch).*

Below the Virgin in the north conch is a representation of the Deesis, one of the earliest known. It is, moreover, fully developed, composite in form and content, with a further two persons appended to the Trimorph of Christ, the Virgin and St John the Baptist. To the left of the Virgin is a dedicatory inscription. Christ, in an iconographic type of the period, with short hair and beard, is depicted in a special panel, emphasizing his divine presence, with the apocalyptic 'O ΩΝ' (the being) in old lettering on the crossed

halo. Christ, in princely pose of the Pantokrator, stepping on a footstool, blesses and holds the closed scroll of the Word. The slender and graceful figures of 'Ayia Maria' – as the Virgin is called in pre-iconoclastic representations – left, and an enigmatic, haloed female in luxurious regal raiment and crown, right, make supplication to the Lord with outstretched arms. Further right is St John the Baptist also in supplication, and opposite, left, close to the Virgin, 'Ayios Solomon', in royal robes and formal, frontal pose. He clasps to his breast a cross with small wreath at the centre, an allusion to the idea of the Passion. It has recently been proposed that the crowned female figure personifies the Church as the 'Bride of Christ' – in accordance with traces of an inscription – who, as foundation of Holy Wisdom, inferred by the presence of Solomon, and in the revelatory guise of a queen, makes supplication at the side of the sovereign Christ, along with the Virgin and St John the Baptist, for the salvation of the world. The Deesis, rich in meaning, continues above into the majestic Virgin with Christ Emmanuel, constituting an ensemble of multi-dimensional apocalyptic and soteriological content.

Drandakis 1988, 75ff. Pallas 1989-90, 129ff.

### 6. *The Journey to Bethlehem, 7th-8th cent. (?)*

*Italy, Castelseprio, Santa Maria (sanctuary).*

The sanctuary of the triconch church of Santa Maria, in the village of Castelseprio near Milan, is decorated with superb wall-paintings. Pinnacles of Byzantine art, inspired by the vital tradition of Hellenistic painting, they refer to the Virgin Mary, to whom the church is dedicated, and, to a manifestation of the Incarnation of the Word they illustrate in a continuous narrative, in two successive decorative zones, the series of events from the Annunciation to the Presentation of Christ in the Temple.

The Journey to Bethlehem appears in the upper zone, unfolding to the right, outside the walled city and in front of its monumental gateway. In the lead, guiding the ass, is Joseph's son – usually James is mentioned – with part of the figure remaining at the right, in the middle is the young, haloed Mary, seated on the ass, and behind is the aged Joseph, leaning on his staff and making lively gestures in her direction, to which she calmly responds. The representation, inspired by the apocryphal narrations, focuses on the discussion between Joseph and Mary about the cause of her sadness and joy, and her prophetic pronouncement on the Gentiles destined to receive the Lord.



The terrain slopes roughly and the beast plods on with difficulty, as if weighed down by the burden of the Virgin, conveying the reality of the Incarnation, as does the dialogue with Joseph. The faces gleam in the atmospheric light, the beautifully draped garments pulsate and the Hellenizing architectural forms are described in muted shades, with fine precision of line and the gateway in perspective. Further inside, a tree spreads a bare, discordant, winter branch, a symbolic presence of deprived life.

Weitzmann 1951, 52ff.

*7. The Presentation of Christ in the Temple, 7th-8th cent. (?). Italy, Castelseprio, Santa Maria (sanctuary).*

The Presentation of Christ in the Temple, in the middle zone, documents the doctrine of the Incarnation with the prophetic testimony of Symeon who 'came by the Spirit into the temple' in order to welcome 'Christ the Lord' (Luke II:22-40). Symeon, left, bows in readiness to take the Child in his embrace. The Virgin, right, gently restrains the infant Christ who, virtually suspended in space, outstretches his arms to the venerable old man. Behind the righteous Symeon is the prophetess Anne, at the edge, in dynamic sideways pose. Adjacent to Mary are Joseph, behind, holding a pair of turtle-doves, his hands covered in reverence by the himation, and two official escorts, possibly priests or witnesses to the events, the first of imposing mien, his face in profile. Faintly drawn in the triumphal arch of the apse are two small, facing figures, probably remnants of the Annunciation, and the cross at the apex of the shell is a reminder of the prophecy of the redemptive Passion. The figures are rendered in perspective, with an immediacy in their modelling and the licence of aristocratic, Classicizing art. Colour, with delicate hues of blue and pink, marks both the transcendental and the temporal aspect of the festive occasion. The firm yet light and airy drawing captures the psychological state of the sensitive characters. The slender lines of the haloed Mother of God extol the grace of the Despoina; Christ is a lively infant, adorned with a transparent, immaterial halo, the arms of the cross within it escaping into space; Symeon, radiant in his years, bows in the presence of the divine, his eyes filled with the supplication, 'Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace'.

Weitzmann 1951, 62ff.

*8-9. Joshua with the Archangel Michael, 2nd half of the 10th cent.*

*Monastery of Hosios Loukas, katholikon (nave, north cross arm).*

The wall-painting of Joshua, the oldest in the famous Monastery of Hosios Loukas in Phokis, was discovered in the katholikon under the marble revetment of the east wall in the north arm of the cross, where the shrine of the tomb-reliquary of the saint is located. It belongs to the decoration of the earlier church of the Panayia that stood next to it on the north-east side. Painted on the exterior of the elegant, tetrastyle domed cross-in-square church of the Panayia, it originally adorned the south end of the west side of the two-columned narthex-lite which was incorporated in the large octagonal katholikon erected contiguous with the church in 1011.

The representation narrates the appearance of the Archangel Michael to Joshua, prior to the fall of Jericho (Joshua V:13-15). The commander of the Hebrews, in pearl-embroidered military uniform, haloed and ready for battle, holding his spear in relaxed stance, his sword at his waist and his shield hanging from his shoulder on his back, turns and raises his hand in speech to the nowadays effaced commander of the Lord. The dialogue is conducted in the inscriptions between them. This theme, popular in the tenth and eleventh centuries, and not unusual in cycles of wall-paintings dedicated to Michael, epitomizes the triumphant spirit of victorious campaigns. Its position in the monastery is most probably connected with the recapture of Crete in 961, which Hosios Loukas had foretold. Projected against the off-white ground, exuding youthful vigour, the powerful, monumental, perfectly modelled and handsome figure of Joshua is pervaded by that serene disposition, Classical grace and harmony distinctive of tenth-century works. The pseudocufic motifs on his helmet and neckpiece are of the same conception as those ubiquitous in the rich and splendid sculpted decoration of the church of the Panayia. As with the sculptures, the exceptional quality of this, the only section of wall-painting to be found, leads to an artist from Constantinople.

Stikas 1970, 147ff. Bouras 1980, 11ff.

*10-11. The Encounter of Christ with St John the Baptist, 3rd quarter of the 11th cent.*

*Monastery of Hosios Loukas, katholikon (SW chapel).*

The hieratic magnificence of the mosaic decoration in the central areas of the Greek-cross-octagon church and in the



narthex in the splendid katholikon of Hosios Loukas is succeeded by wall-paintings in the same spirit in the chapels on the west and north sides. In the south-west chapel, where there is a proliferation of saints, as in the mosaics, the full-length figure of the Virgin Hodegetria adorns the apse, with hierarchs close by; the representation of Christ's encounter with St John the Baptist, prior to his Baptism (Matthew III:13-17), unique to the chapel, is in the upper register; a gem-studded cross and the hand of God blessing in a star-spangled sky fills the cross-vault. The painted composition at once designates the chapel's liturgical use – the special service for blessing the holy water, and related rituals – and denotes, with a spare and lucid statement of doctrine, the central importance of the Baptism in the work of the Divine Economy. Significant for its pictorial integrity, the scene of Christ's meeting with St John the Baptist, on his way from Galilee to be baptized, is rendered in an abstract vein, against a deep blue background and on a green ground. The protagonists are conspicuously placed on adjoining faces of the east and north walls, below columned arches, in a manner which enhances the figure of Christ in the dominant east side of the chapel. The Baptist, left, with cruciferous stave, receives Christ with trepidation and respect; the Lord, holding the scroll of the Law, advances towards him, blesses him and dismisses his objections to the baptism. The dialogue between them is registered in the inscriptions with excerpts from the Bible.

Chatzidakis-Bacharas 1982, 27ff., 83ff.

*12. St Sergios, 3rd quarter of the 11th cent.  
Monastery of Hosios Loukas, katholikon (SW chapel).*

Outstanding among the serried ranks of saints, full-length and in medallions, decorating the south-west chapel are Sergios, Nikitas and Bacchos, on the spacious north wall. Each is depicted standing and in a separate panel framed by a broad, dark-coloured border, like large icons hung high up on the wall, whose surface is embellished with painted imitation marble revetment. The saints, lavishly attired, are portrayed in the conventional pose of martyrs, clasping their cross before them on the chest and with the other hand beside it in a gesture of supplication. The warm ochre ground of the panels, and of the saintly figures of the chapel in general, excepting those in the east part, simulates the gold of mosaics, just as the imitation marble dado, the luxurious ornaments articulating the sur-

faces with architectural clarity, the superiority of the saints – single and in groups – with their monumental strength and formal simplicity, all accord with the system of organization of mosaic decoration. The young Sergios, virtually identical to Bacchos in appearance, is clad in courtly raiment: a light-coloured robe embellished with gold-embroidered appliqué – the Byzantine *paragaudia* – a gem-studded belt and a blue cloak fastened by a precious brooch on the left shoulder. The modesty of the figure is enhanced by the essentially transcendental light of the dark blue halo, its graduated tones merging harmoniously with the diffused green shadows of the face and the subtle rouging of the tender cheeks.

Chatzidakis-Bacharas 1982, 99ff.

*13. St Nikitas, 3rd quarter of the 11th cent.  
Monastery of Hosios Loukas, katholikon (SW chapel).*

St Nikitas is depicted on the north side of the south-west chapel, disrupting the pairing of Sergios and Bacchos, saints with a common feast day. The dark courtly attire, emphasizing his central position, and the arrangement of the cloak, fastened at the throat with a precious clasp, add rhythmical weight to the axial alignment of the three figures. In the eighteenth-century Painter's Manual by Dionysios of Phournas, Nikitas is described as 'of the same kind as Christ', a similarity already apparent in Middle Byzantine representations of him. In Hosios Loukas he is rendered with features like those of the saints on either side, young and 'just growing a beard', the only resemblance to Christ being the colour of his garments. The blue halo heightens the gleam of his eyes as they gaze askance. The use of line in describing the features, the outlines and the hair, as well as for tracing the folds in the garments, and the plasticity achieved through shades of colour, endow the saint with a transcendental air, an abstract limpidity. The common traits in the wall-paintings of the chapel and the mosaic decoration bespeak the conception of a single painting programme in the church, in association with the use of its parts in the practice of worship. The style of painting in the south-west chapel, which displays a more modelled unfurling than that of the north-west funerary chapel and conveys meanings indicative of advanced views on the elaboration of the liturgy, has led to the dating of the wall-paintings to the third quarter of the eleventh century, to the years just after 1050.

Chatzidakis-Bacharas 1982, 100ff., 183ff.



14. *The Entry into Jerusalem, 3rd quarter of the 11th cent.*  
*Monastery of Hosios Loukas, katholikon (crypt, north wall).*

The painting programme in the Greek-cross funerary chapel-crypt underneath the katholikon, is articulated in zones of clear structure and content; imitation marble revetment below, large representations – primarily from the Passion and the Anastasis – on the main surfaces of the walls, and circular medallions with saints against an ornamental ground in the cross-vaults of the roof. The Entry into Jerusalem, on the north side, is narrated with clarity and simplicity in iconography and composition. Christ, seated on 'the foal of an ass', approaches the holy city, accompanied probably by the young Philip, who walks alone behind him, his tall, slender figure enveloped in a stylized himation and the flowing folds of his chiton. The mountain in the background, verdant with low vegetation, as if strewn with palm fronds on its convoluted slopes, follows Christ's sedate progress. The Lord, in frontal pose with subtle torsions of the body as he converses with his disciple and the Jews, aspires with his gold halo to the majesty of the Pantokrator. He is welcomed at the gateway to Jerusalem by eminent citizens, serious and formal, and the common folk, in a representative group of four persons; the leading elder with palm frond; the youth behind, disrupting the symmetrical repetition of poses with the troubled turn of his head. A child lays down its garment at the donkey's feet for Christ to pass, another watches the event from the boughs of a palm tree. The significance of size and of spatial distance, and of the small number of persons, as in other contemporary representations of the theme, the sober coloration harmoniously interwoven in the groups, and the subdued narrative character of the composition imprint the symbolism of the Entry into Jerusalem on the prelude to the Passion. The movement is tardy and ritualistic, the tone hieratic, the large, wide-open eyes reflect quakings of the soul with expressive gravity.

Connor 1991, 9ff., 32ff.

15. *The Entombment of Christ and the Holy Women at the Tomb, 3rd quarter of the 11th cent.*  
*Monastery of Hosios Loukas, katholikon (crypt, south wall).*

On the south side of the funerary crypt, opposite the Entry into Jerusalem, the representation of the Entombment completes the synoptic cycle of the Passion, and the adjoining Holy Women at the Tomb delimits the events of

the Resurrection. This is the only instance in the crypt where the semantics of two scenes placed in the same tableau are obvious. Christ's burial and resurrection, as related in the gospels, illustrate in continuous narrative and with poetic candour in their rhetorical contrast, the final episodes in the story of the Son of Man, which are the very foundations of the concept of salvation. Against a backdrop of mountains, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, left, place the deceased Christ in the heavy sarcophagus, his body wrapped in the shroud, as befitting the Lord. The most sweet Virgin Mary beside him, mourns with dignity. The two women bringing myrrh to the tomb retreat, side by side, right, like frightened shades at the sight of the angel seated on the stone. The heavenly messenger, girdled in curves of triumph and his wings joyfully raised, points to the empty sepulchre, announcing to the holy women that the Lord has risen. The rich and delicate symphony of colour, stressed in the light mountain massifs in the background, plays with lyrical pulse in the calm narration, the long drawn out canticle of the lamentation, and the resurrection ode suddenly culminates in the light and the size of the angel on the right.

Connor 1991, 37ff.

16-19. *Saints George, Anikitos, Vikentios and Arethas, 3rd quarter of the 11th cent.*

*Monastery of Hosios Loukas, katholikon (crypt, cross-vaults).*

In the ten cross-vaults of the ceiling of the crypt, quartets of saints in circular medallions, in axial order, 'sail across' the flower-strewn, paradisaal ground. A multitudinous host of apostles, martyrs, military saints and hosioi sides with the Deesis (Trimorph) in the apse, alluding to the requiem mass. The martyrs and military saints, portrayed in bust and frontal pose like all the rest, in garments embellished with *paragaudia* and a cloak fastened on the shoulder with a precious clasp, holding the cross in front, adorn three of the main cross-vaults on the north-south axis; to the north is George, to the south Anikitos, Vikentios and Arethas. The hosioi in the south-east cross-vault furnish valuable information, in conjunction with other monumental and literary evidence, on the church and its decoration. They are Loukas, Philotheos, Athanasios and Theodosios, deceased abbots of the monastery, as the inscription 'the hosios our father' accompanying their names indicates, whose homonymous patron saints are depicted in the north-east cross-vault. In the honorary



position at the east, corresponding to Hosios Loukas, is Theodosios, whose secular name was Theodoros Leovachos. An imperial functionary, scion of a wealthy family of Theban magnates, he most probably commissioned the mosaic decoration of the church. Theodoros-Theodosios Leovachos is known to have been abbot of the monastery in 1048, when the religious brotherhood of the Virgin Nafpaktiotissa was founded, since he is mentioned in its *typikon*. His representation here, along with the other saintly fathers who toiled for the glory of the Monastery of Hosios Loukas, dates the magnificent wall-paintings of the crypt after his death, in the years around the middle of the eleventh century, perhaps during the abbacy of Grigorios, who installed the marble revetment in the katholikon.

Chatzidakis 1969, 127ff. Oikonomides 1992, 245ff.

20, 22. *The Ascension, 1037-1056.*

*Ohrid, Ayia Sophia (sanctuary vault).*

The decoration in the metropolis of Ayia Sophia, a large, three-aisled basilica with narthex, and at one time domed, erected on the site of a previous church by the Archbishop of Ohrid, Leo (1037-1056), the first from Constantinople, constitutes one of the most important painted works of the eleventh century, c.1040, in terms of thematic content. Monumental clarity, modelled symmetry, iconographic vigour and fully-fledged avant-garde ideas all bespeak Leo's ties with the Capital, from where the painter of this ambitious work must also have come.

The representation of the Ascension rises triumphantly in the sanctuary vault. Wide, monumental and extraordinarily impressive, it moves with dynamic symmetry in the bright blue heaven with psalms of the procession of angels below. 'For the Lord most high is awesome; He is great King over all the earth' (Psalm XLVII :2). Christ, majestic, golden-robed and seated on the rainbow ascends in the apocalyptic light of his mandorla, which is upheld by four angels, flying around it, their himatia billowing out in space with linear grace and lovely curves. The olive trees around exult as ornaments, and the earth below pulsates with waves of soft rocks. Awe is registered in the intense gestures and poses of the apostles divided on the sides of the vault. The Virgin, to the fore of the north group, with round, fresh face and sweet gaze, lively in side view and standing on a royal footstool, raises her hands in supplication to Christ. The angels too, balanced in the midst of the

apostolic groups, one on each side, with beautiful outspread wings, point to the Lord, revealing to the spectators on earth that 'thus he shall come again, as you behold him now ascending to heaven'. At the right edge of the south group the prophet-king David is unexpectedly represented, completing the eight persons on each side. His presence alludes to his psalms that laud the glorious ascent of the Lord to heaven. His extremely rare participation in the scene is encountered in Constantinopolitan psalters, such as the ninth-century Chludov codex in Moscow, in two miniatures of which David, the composer of psalms, is shown alone below in the Ascension.

Djurić 1963, lff. Hamann-Mac Lean 1976, 215ff.

21. *Procession of Angels, 1037-1056.*

*Ohrid, Ayia Sophia (sanctuary vault).*

The large, imposing figure of the Virgin in the sanctuary apse, in frontal pose on an opulent throne, with the Christ Child in brilliant mandorla sitting at her chest, is worshipped by a host of adoring, genuflecting angels advancing on the sides of the vaulted roof. They are depicted in three-quarter pose in a broad zone at the springing of the vault and below the Ascension, in groups of five on either side, in a long, ritual procession, one behind the other at an appropriate distance. Modest and formal in their homage, with the lower part of the body condensed in 'perspective', their hands, outstretched before them in reverence, are covered by the himation. The wings thrust gracefully into the air, generating the slow, rolling motion of their rhythmical aspect. The linear folds describe the curves of the bodies, negotiating the light with shaded planes, and are dense on the arms, parallel and melodic on the finials. The clear, concise relief on the lovely faces is illumined with a calm expression of holy contemplation in the lively, askance gaze; the long, luxuriant hair, with wispy, calligraphic curls, conveys the idea of elegant beauty.

Djurić 1963, III.

23. *Saints Leo, Gregory the Dialogos and Silvester, 1037-1056.*

*Ohrid, Ayia Sophia (diakonikon apse).*

The large host of saintly hierarchs in the sanctuary and the parabemata underlines the ecumenical character of the Christian Church. Representatives of the Orthodox patriarchates and of Rome – the patriarchs of Constantinople



in a prominent position in the central apse – are depicted *en face*, full-length or in bust, in the type of a portable icon. As part of the painting programme of the church they reflect ideas of seminal significance associated with the burning issue of the age, the relationship between the Eastern and the Western Churches, in which Archbishop Leo was also embroiled prior to the Schism in 1054.

Saints Leo, Gregory the Dialogos and Silvester adorn the lower zone of the apse of the diakonikon, along with other primates of Rome. Standing, *en face*, the right leg to the fore, their deportment formal and restrained, they clasp to the breast with the left hand, covered by the phelonion, a closed gospel book with gem-studded binding. The repeated, hieratic pose is enlivened by minor variations in the placement and the gestures of these tall, ascetic figures with their distinctive physiognomies, impassioned sideways gaze and heavy frown, giving them a tense aspect. Clear lines, soft relief, short parallel folds and muted colours, alternating on their vestments with the large dark crosses on the omophorion, render with artistic force hierarchs enjoying spiritual authority and leadership status.

24. *The Communion of the Apostles, 1037-1056.*

Ohrid, *Ayia Sophia* (sanctuary apse).

In the middle zone of the sanctuary apse, beneath the enthroned Virgin and Child, the eucharistic Communion of the Apostles is attuned to the rhythm of the procession of venerated angels on the sides of the vault, which is transferred to the apse. The disciples, in reverend motion, their hands outstretched and piously covered by the himation, advance towards Christ who officiates at the centre, beneath the ciborium of the sanctuary, assisted by two angels-deacons holding the liturgical fans. The Lord, *en face*, his expression serene, blesses with his right hand and holds the bread in his left. The communion chalice stands on the altar. Peter and Paul, leaders of the groups, bow, the former's arms bared in adoration. The drapery of the garments is dense, the faces imbued with intense spirituality. The symmetrical composition at Ohrid was to be the model in 1208-1209 for the painter who decorated the church of the Panayia in the monastery at Studenica.

Hamann-Mac Lean 1976, 133ff.

25. *The Communion of the Apostles, 1105-1106.*

Cyprus, *Panayia Asinou* (sanctuary apse).

The aisleless barrel-vaulted church near the village of

Nikitari, in the foothills of the Troodos mountain range, was built and decorated in 1105-1106 'διά συνδρομῆς καὶ πολλοῦ πόθου Νικηφόρου μαγίστρου τοῦ Ἰσχυρίου, βασιλεύοντος Ἀλεξίου τοῦ Κομνηνοῦ' (through the contribution and great desire of Nikephoros, Magister of Ischirion, in the reign of Alexios Comnenos), according to the foundation inscription. A narthex was added later. The church functioned as the *katholikon* of the Phorbion Monastery. Covered with wall-paintings of different periods, it preserves a considerable part of its original decoration. The work of an accomplished artist, this is calm, lucid and monumental in character with a discreet aura of luxury and bright, vibrant colours. The treatment of the iconography reveals an awareness of the progressive tendencies in the Byzantine capital.

The Communion of the Apostles adorns the middle zone of the sanctuary apse. Depicted left is the Giving of the Bread (*Metadosis*) to the six disciples headed by Peter, and right the Giving of the Wine (*Metalepsis*) to the group led by the young John. Christ appears twice, in both scenes encompassed in a single composition with the red-covered altar in the middle. The liturgical symmetry, emphasized by the two formal buildings at either edge with cloths spread on their roofs, is variegated by the placement and pose of the apostles in close-packed groups, the line of their figures undulating into the background. These are already imbued, in their narrative coherence and colour treatment, with principles of harmony which mark the spirit of early Comnenian art. With regard to iconography, the Lord occupies a special position at the culmination of the sequence in the sanctuary. Preserved right, with gold halo, he administers the sacrament to John from a precious chalice, his eye fixed on the other apostle beyond, 'who although eats bread with me has lifted up his heel against me' (John XIII:18). Judas appears perhaps for the first time in the Asinou church – and only rarely later – shown at the edge, his back to the viewer, the bread in his mouth and his leg raised ready to leave: 'Having received the piece of bread, he then went out immediately. And it was night' (John XIII:30).

Sacopoulo 1966, 5ff., 68ff.

26. *The Raising of Lazarus, 1105-1106.*

Cyprus, *Panayia Asinou* (nave, south side of vault).

The Raising of Lazarus, on the south side of the vault, belongs to the cycle of the Passion. Christ, left, an imposing



figure, accompanied by Peter and Thomas, outstretches his hand and summons forth Lazarus, who appears as a handsome, lively young man in the tomb opposite. Mary pays homage to the Lord, while Martha gazes with eloquent gestures towards her brother risen from the dead. A man struggles to move the tombstone, bent double under its weight. Another man, standing a little way off, loosens the shroud, a cloth over his face, alluding to Martha's preceding remark: 'Lord, he already smells', expressively juxtaposing to death Lazarus's already fragrant life. At the right edge are numerous Jews, witnesses to the miracle, in the same position as in Ayios Georgios at Kurbinovo, of the end of the century. The mountains tower up into the bright blue sky, low vegetation scrambles joyfully over a crest in the middle. The miracle at Bethany is illustrated with synoptic, emphatic narration and iconographic fullness. The Classicizing tendencies in the work are typified in Christ's pose and, above all, in the marble tomb of antique aspect, with Corinthian column capitals and relief entablature, rare in other representations of the theme. Lazarus's luxurious cerements are equally in keeping with the aristocratic style of the art.

Sacopoulos 1966, 22ff.

27. *The Dormition of the Virgin, 1105-1106.*  
Cyprus, Panayia Asinou (nave, west wall).

A magnificent Dormition of the Virgin, patron of the church, occupies the entire width of the west wall, over the entrance. The accompanying inscription, partially preserved, on a broad gold band across the bottom, lauds the 'one who bore the Lord of the Word' in a direct reference to the Incarnation, which rhetorically interprets the resolute epiphany of Christ in the Dormition, holding his mother's soul in his hands, just as she held him as a babe. Reversing the normal model of the representation, the Virgin is placed at the right, according to the movement of the narration in the church, Christ, *en face*, holds her soul on the other side and Peter, at the head of the bier, censes with his left hand. The Dormition of the Virgin is narrated with exceptional symmetry in a flat composition of monumental dignity, which moves in the troubled ritual of sorrow, the postures of the apostles stirring unprecedented tones of emotionalism in the wall-painting. The holy women lament on covered balconies, upheld by columns, projecting from the vaulted buildings in the background, as in an analogous, superb Dormition, of earlier date, in a

triptych icon in the Monastery of St Catherine on Mount Sinai. A gold star shines in the *segmentum coeli* above. The composition is succinctly regulated by gold, red and white and, as in the Raising of Lazarus, the architectural forms and the opulent ornaments on the bier and the buildings are refined with a spirit of aristocratic art. Worthy of note is the Virgin's soul, crowned by a red halo and wrapped in the same cerements as Lazarus.

Sacopoulos 1966, 37ff.

28. *St Theodore the Stratilatis, after 1152.*  
Thrace, Pherres (Vira), Panayia Kosmosotira (nave, south cross arm).

The magnificent cross-in-square, five-domed church once belonging to the Monastery of the Panayia Kosmosotira at Byzantine Vira, near the river Evros (Hebros) – nowadays the township of Pherres – is a splendid foundation (1151-1152) of the Sebastokrator Isaac Comnenos, son of Emperor Alexios I and brother of John II, and still has sections of its original painted decoration, which is contemporary with the building.

Among the best preserved figures are four of the eight military saints which initially existed in the tympana of the north and south arm of the cross. Diademed saints, linked in confronting pairs, are depicted in bust between the windows of the lower register, in the second decorative zone of the walls. The first saint, in the south tympanum, is identified from his portrait features as St Theodore the Stratilatis and corresponds to St Theodore the Tyro opposite. With thick, curly hair and two-pointed beard, he is shown in frontal pose, grasping his spear and the hilt of his sword, in parallel alignment in front, and accoutred in opulent regal raiment: red tunic, golden armour, deep blue cloak with gold and bejewelled appliqué, fine embroideries on the sleeves, and a diadem set with pearls on the head. With solid stance, noble features, decisive gaze, serious expression, affable, spiritual and serene ethos, his mien is that of a valiant soldier.

Patterson 1964, 80ff. Sinos 1985, 8ff., 195ff. Panayotidi 1989, 459ff.

29. *St Merkourios, after 1152.*  
Thrace, Pherres (Vira), Panayia Kosmosotira (nave, south cross arm).

The best-preserved figure in the church, the saint to the right of St Theodore the Stratilatis and turned slightly towards him, on the south wall of the south arm of the cross, is identified as St Merkourios. With broad shoulders



and powerful chest, upright deportment and head held high, he presents a heroic and noble figure in his prime, projected against the dark blue ground. The coloration of the work is lovely and the character masculine. Like Theodore, he holds the spear and the sword in its scabbard in front, his movements restricted. The vivid aquamarine of the cuirass, tempered with green and white on the elegantly overfolded fastening of the baldric, wonderfully matches the deep purple cloak, the pink tunic and the burnished gold elements of the panoply, and stresses the brownish tones of the face. A diadem crowns his short, loose, wavy hair, which ripples at the sides as if wind-blown, the blond highlights illumining his face and describing the elegant, stylized curls in a decorative manner typical of Comnenian art. The modelling, firm and controlled, uses precision of line and calm alternation and smooth shading of colours, to achieve the sculptural value of a Classical, monumental figure at the zenith of Comnenian art. The expression, concentrated yet impulsive, sets its seal on the warrior's handsome face with a furrow on the brow, and the inscrutable, transcendental gaze is transfixed on the beholder.

Patterson 1964, 78ff.

*30. St Prokopios (?), after 1152.*

*Thrace, Pherres (Vira), Panayia Kosmosotira (nave, north cross arm).*

The youngest saint of all, following Theodore the Tyro, is probably Prokopios, as inferred from the style and length of the hair, as well as from his position opposite Merkourios; or perhaps another of the particularly venerated soldier saints of like age, though it is not Demetrios, with whom he has been identified. Saints George and Demetrios will have been the leaders of the group in the nave. The tender, almost adolescent face, with noble lines and soft, rounded modelling that leaves the greenish shadows graduated at the edges, bears a confident expression, the enthusiasm of raw youth dreaming of great deeds glowing in his large, almond-shaped eyes. The bronze-coloured hair, crowned by a precious diadem, blows out and enlivens the face, with bright blond streaks describing the calligraphic curls. A figure of Classical beauty and grace, with the aura of a prince, he wears the familiar Comnenian type of greyish blue, silver breastplate embellished with lovely floral motifs, fitting snugly to the body and revealing the anatomical details of the torso, an elegantly plaited baldric and an embroidered purple cloak.

Upstanding and modest, he proudly clasps the spear and the hilt of the sword in front. The row of soldier saints is delimited above by the prophets and other Old Testament figures, and below by the procession of concelebrating hierarchs, unique in its position in the nave – perhaps the only parallel is the earlier group of frontal hierarchs, in the same position, in Ayia Sophia at Constantinople. The band of saints, in a liturgical choir at a celestial court, sang a hymn to Christ Pantokrator, once depicted in the dome, and also the requiem mass for the Sebastokrator Isaac Comnenos who was buried in the church of the Panayia Kosmosotira.

Patterson 1964, 79ff.

*31-32. St Theodore the Tyro, after 1152.*

*Thrace, Pherres (Vira), Panayia Kosmosotira (nave, north cross arm).*

Of the two saints surviving on the north wall of the north arm of the cross, the first right may be recognized as Theodore the Tyro. In his upstanding, frontal pose he turns slightly and looks towards the sanctuary. Although in the rank of soldiers his uniform is richer and more profusely decorated than that of his counterpart Theodore the Stratilatis, with gold-embroidered fabrics and a gem-studded diadem. In his right hand he holds the spear diagonally, with the same gesture as Stratilatis, the index finger raised and resting on the weapon, and in his left, he holds a round shield before him, which is intersected by the adjacent window. His image is a harmonious interplay of blue-green, deep purple, scarlet, gold, white and brown. The beard is thick and well-trimmed, the hair short leaving the ears free, the face long and full with deep brown eyes and prominent features, the modelling compact as if in relief, in a figure distinguished for its gravity and valour. The expression is serious and haughty, indicating a strong character, a person with prudence and prestige – an impression also corroborated by his advanced maturity. According to a recent view, the military saints in the Panayia Kosmosotira were given the visages of members of the royal family of the Comnenoi: Alexios I to Theodore the Tyro, John II to Theodore the Stratilatis, the Sebastokrator Isaac to Merkourios and perhaps that of his brother Andronikos to Prokopios (?). However, a crucial piece of evidence which challenges the validity of the forementioned view is the fact that there were probably originally represented eight saints in the same row – traces of the first are still discernible on the south wall – taken



in conjunction with the position of the extant figures.

Patterson 1964, 77ff. Bakirtzis 1993, 177ff.

33-35. *The Nativity, c.1160.*

*Thessaloniki, Monastery of Hosios David (nave, south vault).*

The few wall-paintings in the former katholikon of the Monastery of Christ the Saviour (Latomos Monastery), later known as the church of Hosios David, are priceless works of the twelfth century. The Nativity and the Baptism in the south vault, and fragments of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple and the Transfiguration on the side walls below, mark the culmination of Classical style at the apogee of Comnenian art.

The Nativity unfolds on the east side of the vault, rhythmical and serene, with low grassy hills basking indolently to the fore, their configuration variegated with fine vegetation, and the cave rising up behind, wide open to the miracle, its stepped peak relieved by warm, gambolling rocks, opposite the deep blue sky. The Mother of God, and the newly-born Lord in a manger close by her, warmed by the animals, are worshipped in parallel pose, and the Magi, in a rare position in the cave, pay homage to the babe with precious gifts. Three angels on high extol the birth of the Saviour and another at the right edge brings the tidings to the shepherds. At the bottom of the scene, left, Joseph, with his back to the events and seated on a saddle, ponders on the 'great mystery in the cave'. Further right, at the centre, is the infant's bath: with the midwife and Salome, beautiful women bedecked in bracelets; the vain maid in an elegant and extravagant pose absent-mindedly pouring water, her vacant gaze directed at the viewer; the child, sculpted, with radiantly cheerful aspect. Harmony of forms and colours, monumental size and a vital spirit of Classical grace; a perception of beauty and sense of space; a lyrical disposition and calm ethos – these compose a work of the highest standard, which can be dated close to the time of the Kosmosotira at Pherres and of Ayios Panteleimon at Nerezi.

Tsigaridas 1986, 11ff., 33ff.

36. *The Descent from the Cross, 1164.*

*Nerezi, Ayios Panteleimon (nave, north cross arm).*

The lovely five-domed church of Ayios Panteleimon in the village of Nerezi, near Skopje, of cross-in-square type with narthex, preserves much of its original painted decoration, dating from 1164. The brilliant work of a Constan-

tinopolitan master at the height of twelfth-century art, it was executed under the patronage of Alexios Angelos Comnenos, grandson of the emperor Alexios I Comnenos. On the west side of the north arm of the cross of the nave is the Descent from the Cross. An austere representation limited to the protagonists of the drama, it extols the Passion in the silence of the blue ground. The decent Joseph, on the ladder, takes down the immaculate body of Christ from the cross, its stiffness weighing down the old man's strong arms. The lamenting Virgin Mary helps support it in her embrace, sorrowfully kissing Christ's face, while St John, on the other side, also kisses his hand. Nicodemus, below, removes the nails which pinned the Saviour's feet to the cross. A subdued indication of landscape, the sparse undulations of the earth subtly consuming the shades of green in the blue of the background. The small hill of Golgotha, on which the cross stands, and the basket with the instruments of the Passion at the right edge do not disturb the ritualistic character of the composition. Joseph's gaze at the believer makes him a secret communicant in the scene. The Descent from the Cross takes place with a keen sense of lyricism and deep human pain. The elongated curves of the Virgin and St John emotionally uphold the corners of the composition, which proffers the 'undefiled body' of Christ for worship, and the agile crossed lines of the complex animatedly govern its structure, while the sensitive folds on the garments, the densely flowing series of which is adorned with lace at the edges and softly describes the limbs, embellish its form. In the heavy shadow of the cross, the tall, slender bodies and the faces restrain the pathos with dignity, and the beauty of finely wrought line and the harmony of colour sculpt the drama with wisdom, vitalize the rhythm and transmute awe into the spiritual value of the icon.

Miljković-Peppek 1966, Iff., III. Hamann-Mac Lean 1976, 261 ff., 267.

37. *The Entombment of Christ, 1164.*

*Nerezi, Ayios Panteleimon (nave, north cross arm).*

The superb Descent from the Cross is followed on the north side of the north arm of the cross by the Entombment, which is interwoven with the Lamentation. The inscription has been lost and the theme is confirmed by wall-paintings of the same iconographic type in a ruined small church of the Saviour Christ near Koutsovendis in Cyprus and in the Ayioi Anargyroi at Kastoria, of the early and the late twelfth century respectively, where the in-



scription 'the Entombment' is preserved. Small angels fly in agitated poses of mourning, above, and on earth bare mountainous massifs in the background are moved with troubled curves in the egressional hymns and gape left in the opening of a tomb. Close by is the basket with the instruments of the Passion and the flask of myrrh. Nearby too, the Virgin, fallen on the ground, holds her son in the winding sheet and kisses him, distraught with grief. 'Many times slept you on my breast as child, and now you have fallen asleep there as a dead man', she recalls, her face furrowed in intense pain and shedding bitter tears. St John, in the middle, venerates and kisses the hand of Christ, while Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, in parallel poses at the right, piously hold up his legs, and the two solitary women standing at the edge weep. The vast desert of pain is all pervasive. The Nerezi wall-painting, a masterpiece of Comnenian art, renders the elegy for the dead Christ with unprecedented pathos and unutterable humanity. The ritual dignity, economy in composition, impetuous movement and vigorous rhythm, carry away the animate and inanimate around, elevating the word of obligation.

Miljković-Peppek 1966, IVff. Hamann-Mac Lean 1976, 267ff.

### 38. *The Transfiguration, 1164.*

*Nerezi, Ayios Panteleimon (nave, south cross arm).*

The greater part of the Transfiguration, in the south arm of the cross, is preserved. Flooded with light, it narrates the miracle of the apocalyptic theophany of Christ, in a suspended mandorla atop Mount Tabor. On the opposite peaks, Elijah and Moses, with the tablets of the law, converse with the Lord. 'And suddenly a voice came out of the cloud ... And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid' (Matthew XVII:6). At the left, the astonished Peter stretches out his arm to Christ; in the middle, the young John prostrate on the ground, and at the right, half-hidden on the brow of the rock, James in vigilance, are fortunate to behold the brilliance of the divine. Verdant bushes with flowers carol with their brief life in the folds of the mountain, whose curves roll down and rejoice in the light, which refracts and recomposes colour with fine, gentle contrasts, that caresses the faces with palpitation and the garments with linear excitement. The plastic limpidity of colour, the grace of calligraphic line and the nobility of form, the poses that echo the undulations of the landscape, the fluid and elegant finials on the

garments that restrainedly balance the movement, and the very sweet figure of John in front, foundation-stone of the composition, infuse the harmonious expression with an aristocratic artistic spirit.

Hamann-Mac Lean 1976, 266ff.

### 39-40. *Dedicatory scene, 1160-1180.*

*Kastoria, Ayios Nikolaos Kasnitzi (narthex, east wall).*

The church of Ayios Nikolaos, an elegant, aisleless, timber-roofed building with narthex, was founded and decorated by Magister Nikephoros Kasnitis, as proudly declared in the large, archaic-style foundation inscription on the west wall of the nave, in the formal position above the door. It is preceded by the dedicatory scene in the narthex, where the painting is dedicated to the miracles of the honoured saint.

Depicted on the east wall, opposite the entrance to the church, facing one another, are 'Νικηφόρος μάγιστρος καί κτήτωρ ὁ Κασνίτζης' (Nikephoros Kasnitis magister and donor), left, and 'ἡ σύνευνος τοῦ κτήτορος Ἄννα' (the donor's consort Anna), right, incorporated meaningfully into the wider system of decoration of the side, where the bust of St Nicholas in the conch over the lintel is succeeded above by the Holy Keramion and the Deesis with God, the Ancient of Days, in place of Christ. Nikephoros, 'πολλῶν τευτευχῶς δωρεῶν σὼν τρισμάκαρ' (who was fortunate to offer thee many gifts, thrice-blessed one), presents a model of the church in gratitude to the saint, while Anna makes supplication in symmetrical pose. The refined, aristocratic and elegantly dressed figures seem to emerge from the deep blue ground. Of slender stature, upright and modest demeanour, they wear lovely garments in the fashion of the day, especially Anna with her wide, long, pointed sleeves and luxuriously embroidered overdress. The representation of the dignitary Kasnitis and his wife, like that of the noble Limniotis family in the church of the Ayioi Anargyroi, furnishes valuable evidence on Comnenian portraiture and local history.

Pelekanidis - Chatzidakis 1984, 50ff., 56ff. Drakopoulou 1991, 71ff.

### 41. *The Transfiguration, 1160-1180.*

*Kastoria, Ayios Nikolaos Kasnitzi (nave, west wall).*

The Transfiguration on the west wall of the nave and the Ascension on the gable project the glorious theophanies of Christ, as in analogous manner the Dormition of the



Virgin, alongside the Transfiguration in its established position. A similar iconological schema, more erudite and sophisticated in ideological content and compositional structure, was later developed in Ayios Georgios at Kurbinovo, probably by painter A of the church of the Ayioi Anargyroi at Kastoria. The Transfiguration, which also precedes the events of the Passion in the narration of the gospel cycle in the church of Magister Kasnitzis, bears in its multidimensional theological meaning witness to the Incarnation of the Word and the revelation of the divinity of Christ, as well as portending his resurrection and second coming. The Lord, 'throwing the light around him like a cloak', rises up as if weightless, hovering in his wide, elliptical, heavenly mandorla; and shining forth from his radiance are five beams, directed at Moses and Elijah and the three disciples who fall on the ground, dazzled. Forms and colours are enveloped in the haze of gorgeous deep blue that dominates the painting of the church. The holy mountain with its triple peak, its broad, soft curves and stylized cluster of rocks at the edges, offers a grassy setting bathed in sunlight for the conversing prophets and the disciples below, witnesses to the apocalyptic scene. The slim, elegant, compactly modelled figures with their lively inclinations, the swaying, elegant finials of the himatia and the expressive poses of the disciples gracefully construct the composition, which brings round to inaccessible depth 'the archetypal beauty of the image' of the transfigured Christ.

42. *St Nestor, 1160-1180.*

*Kastoria, Ayios Nikolaos Kasnitzi (nave, south wall).*

St Nestor is depicted on the south wall of the nave, in the ranks of the full-length military saints formally aligned in the lower decorative zone of the north and south sides. His pose is calm, expansive and unaffected. With his right hand he raises his spear at the side, while with his left he holds the shield low down, a little behind and resting on the ground. The hilt of his sword in its scabbard projects from his cloak at the side. His body is turned slightly towards the saints ahead, Demetrios and George, and the head inclined in *contrapposto* right, linking him with Merkourios, who follows. His short hair has unruly wisps at the sides, as in Ayios Panteleimon at Nerezi, and the cloak with its elegant fold on the shoulder, indicating its embroidered side, is analogous to that of St Theodore the Tyro there. The accoutrements of the uniform, the type of

weapons and the characteristic shape of the shield are generally comparable with the band of military saints at Nerezi, where the pose, the visages and the modelling of the saints in the Kasnitzis church also find their closest affines. Ease, readiness and dignity, a serious and modest ethos, the indefinite and distant gaze tinged with melancholy, the firm, calligraphic modelling, which sensitively chisels the figures with glittering highlights, imbue St Nestor with the quality of aristocratic art.

43. *The Dormition of the Virgin, 1160-1180.*

*Kastoria, Ayios Nikolaos Kasnitzi (nave, west wall).*

The Dormition on the west wall of the nave is rather unusual in that the Virgin is placed at the right, as in the Panayia Asinou in Cyprus, in keeping with the general rightwards direction of the narration. Her position determines the corresponding one of Christ, who stands in a natural and easy pose beside the Theotokos. In his hands, covered by the himation, he holds her soul, right, a living infant wrapped in a shroud, which he prepares to deliver to the two angels flying towards him. 'Because you held God when he was invested with flesh, you are held in the hands of God when you are divested of flesh'. The rhetorical antithesis, a reference to the Incarnation, in the oration of Leo VI, finds pictorial response in the developed iconographic schema of the representation in the Kasnitzis church; where the ritualistic gestures and poses, the embroidered stars on the coverlet of the splendidly adorned bed and the pearl-studded hexagonal footstool with cushion in front, stress the glory of the Queen of Heaven. The Dormition 'floats' in the deep blue space of the icon with the apostles in supple poses at the sides, in groups which slowly swirl and camber in front of the formal buildings before the Virgin's bed, with long, flowing, linear folds on their garments, and intense sorrow on the faces. Agile, symmetrical and balanced, the clearly distinguished parts contributing to the rhythmical clarity of the whole, the representation opens at the centre and Christ is exalted with a dramatic sense in the pulsation of the narration; the hierarchs near him conduct the funerary rites, close to the honoured Mary.

44. *The Virgin Enthroned with Archangels, c.1180.*

*Kastoria, Ayioi Anargyroi (sanctuary apse).*

The church of the Ayioi Anargyroi, a Middle Byzantine three-aisled basilica with narthex, has some visible wall-



paintings from around the year 1000. The subsequent painted decoration is extensive, commissioned in the twelfth century by a nobleman of Kastoria, Theodoros Limniotis, requesting 'to lie in cool meadows after death and to enjoy good health in life' for himself, his wife Anna Radini and his son Ioannis, who are portrayed for posterity in a magnificent dedicatory scene in the north aisle.

In the composition in the sanctuary the position of the Virgin Enthroned with Child in the apse has precedence, accompanied by the archangels Michael and Gabriel venerating at the sides. The rare iconographic type of the Virgin is repeated in Ayios Georgios at Kurbinovo in 1191, which was probably decorated by the same painter A, the most active of the three who worked in the Ayioi Anargyroi, to whom most of the wall-paintings in the church are due. The prodigious archangels are depicted in elegant, bold and complicated torsion: bowing as they walk lightly and swiftly towards the Virgin, at the centre of the apse, with one foot forward and the other on tiptoe, the face and torso turned back towards the viewer. The lovely amber and roseate wings are lowered in arches attuned to the pulse of the movement, which pulls the pale himation tightly to the body, outlining the limbs, rousing them and plastically disturbing them with rhythmically whirling, cascading folds. Ornate figures, excellently drawn, with soft chromatic hues, with organic, exaggerated modelling and sensitive expression, they constitute a manifestation of a dynamic style of aristocratic Late Comnenian art, which was to be taken to extremes at Kurbinovo.

Pelekanidis - Chatzidakis 1984, 22ff., 38ff. Drakopoulou 1991, 87ff.

#### 45. *The Entombment of Christ, c.1180.*

*Kastoria, Ayioi Anargyroi (nave, central aisle).*

The Entombment, as indicated by the accompanying inscription, depicted on the north side of the central aisle is in the same iconographic type as that executed in Ayios Georgios at Kurbinovo, 1191, probably by the same painter, though in a more erudite variation there. Grief and despair are shed in waves of movement in the representation and reverberate in naked, troubled curves from the bare, jagged crags of the background. The Virgin embraces the stiff, lifeless body of Christ, lying on her lap, which John, in the middle, and the decent Joseph, right, hold in the winding sheet and bear with wide stride to the tomb. Two women on the mountains, rendered in mini-

ature in mourning colours, follow the cortège in silent dirge; beyond, two angels draw the lament heavenwards. Top right, the basket with the instruments of the Passion looms large in its symbolism. Left, the rocks shudder, echoing the Virgin's tempestuous mental state. Christ offers himself in the worship of the faithful, through the gaze of the three persons in the drama aligned in motion. The unbearable weight of the burden is conveyed by the heavy curve of the Virgin's shoulder and the convulsively bent legs. The angular lines of her furrowed figure and the ruffled flow of the folds on the garments intensify her anguish and bitterness, as she confronts, in elevated rhetorical antithesis, the joyous Nativity on the opposite wall.

#### 46-47. *Saints George and Demetrios, c.1180.*

*Kastoria, Ayioi Anargyroi (nave, central aisle).*

Below the Entombment, in a prominent position next to the sanctuary, the beloved duo of military saints, George and Demetrios, is portrayed. The church is also dedicated to George; the decoration of the north aisle is dedicated to him. Demetrios is honoured here along with two other saints of Thessaloniki, David and Theodora. The young George and Demetrios are depicted standing to attention, in frontal pose with a barely perceptible turn towards each other. In the raised right hand they hold the spear, parallel to the body, stressing the verticality of their form, as do the vertically orientated calligraphic inscriptions with their names. In the left hand George clutches a round, polychrome shield, resting upright on the ground, and Demetrios the scabbard with sword, hanging from the waist at the side. The ordered symmetry, with formal and typical gestures and pose, is transmuted into a strident chord of refined contrast by the rich uniforms, with their exaggerated variety and the elegant excess in their decorative and chromatic opulence. George's close-fitting corslet reveals the anatomical details of his upright torso, slightly inclined backwards, and his cloak billows out with an affected opening below; Demetrios's heavily plated cuirass and long tunic virtually conceal his body. The two princes in the band of military saints are characterized by a seriousness, dignity and modesty, the superb calligraphy of the hair, the strong lines of the face, and the red dots on the cheeks. Imposing models of martial virtue and fervent faith, they face the viewer, transfixing him with their noble gaze.

Pelekanidis - Chatzidakis 1984, 39ff.



48. *Theodoros Apseudes, the Anastasis, 1183.*  
*Cyprus, Paphos, Ktima, Enkleistra of Ayios Neophytos (cell, north wall).*

The 'Holy Anastasis' is depicted with the Crucifixion above the tomb of the monastery's founder, Hosios Neophytos, in the cell of the Enkleistra, which was decorated with important wall-paintings by Theodoros Apseudes in 1183, while the saint was still alive. The valuable inscription with the painter's name, one of the very few known from the period, is preserved close to the monumental Deesis, in which Neophytos is represented in veneration, a suppliant before the enthroned Christ.

In Christ's Descent into Hell, the confining of the figures to the essential ones and the absence of any landscape elements, just as in the Crucifixion, project the doctrinal content and the funerary character of the representations chosen by Neophytos to adorn the place of his grave, with obvious expectations for his soul. Christ, against the blue ground, in frontal pose with pronounced *contrapposto*, the cross in his hand and his himation fluttering out in the descent, steps forcefully on the broken gates of Hell, Victor over Death, and raises up the forefather Adam, while gazing on Eve who looks upon him in supplication, her hands covered in reverence. Standing in line in the other coffin are the prophet kings, David and Solomon, and St John the Baptist with open scroll, bearing witness to the coming of the Saviour. The style is monumental and dynamic, the colours bright and vibrant, the visages bear an impassioned gaze. Multiple linear folds on the garments describe details with superficial, synchronized movement and organize the relief of the figures, while others, in contrast, are modelled, swirling and curving the material on the finials of Christ and Adam in dense meanders.

Mango - Hawkins 1966, 121ff., 184ff.

49. *Theodoros Apseudes, the Ascension, 1183.*  
*Cyprus, Paphos, Ktima, Enkleistra of Ayios Neophytos (sanctuary, ceiling).*

The Ascension on the ceiling of the Enkleistra acquires particular importance on account of its proximity to the adjacent composition, where Hosios Neophytos, a monk equal to the angels, appears between two brilliantly arrayed guardian angels, praying and facing the bright blue firmament: 'Τό σχῆμα τοῦτο δυνάς ἡγιασμένη εἰς ἔργον ἐλθεῖν ἱκετεύω σὺν πόθῳ' (I fervently pray that I may be indeed enrolled among the angels by virtue of my habit). The unusual composition, conceived by Theodoros

Apseudes together with the saint – an outstanding example of collaboration between patron and painter – expresses Neophytos's constant and well-grounded desire for his soul's ascent to heaven, accompanied by the archangels, in a manner interwoven in analogy with the meanings and the iconological schema of the apocalyptic Ascension next to it. Flat, ochre hills and stylized olive trees, delimit the earthly environment, where the awe-struck apostles look upon the ascending Lord. Near them, at the centre, the Virgin, in side view, uplifts her arms in supplication to Christ. An angel in formal, frontal pose, steps on a footstool. With raised wings and in rich courtly raiment, like the angels in Neophytos's vision, he raises his hand, witnessing the ascension and proclaiming the second coming of the Lord. Clearly drawn and modelled faces, with strong characters and a perception of beauty; impetuous gestures and poses, and an emphasis on movement; shading of colours and bold contrasts, are the distinctive traits of the affected dynamic style of the work, with which the wall-paintings in the Panayia Arakou, of 1192, some of which are associated with Theodoros Apseudes, display close affinity.

Mango - Hawkins 1966, 164ff. Panayotidi 1993-94.

50. *The Virgin Enthroned with Archangels, late 12th cent.*  
*Patmos, Monastery of St John the Theologian, chapel of the Panayia (sanctuary, east wall).*

The chapel of the Virgin, a twelfth-century, aisleless, cross-vaulted building with smaller vaults at the ends, is attached to the south side of the katholikon. The wall of the refectory, on which it rests at the east, precluded the formation of a sanctuary apse.

In the place of the sanctuary apse is a representation of the Virgin seated on a precious throne with a lyre-shaped back, draped with embroidered silk, the Child before her, in the middle. Flanking the throne are the archangels Michael and Gabriel, resplendent in imperial attire, in frontal pose, withdrawing slightly in reverence, and smaller in size. With one hand behind they hold the top of the back of the throne, with the other at the side they raise a banner. The Virgin, so tall on the throne, 'seat of the Word', the 'holy vehicle' of the Incarnation, holds Christ tenderly in her gentle hands. He blesses with one hand and holds the scroll of the Law in the other. A lively and lovely figure, the Child borrows iconographic traits of the Pantokrator, of doctrinal interest, such as the manner of



blessing with his right hand projecting from the himation. The blue cross on his halo registers with chromatic emphasis the idea of the future Passion, the prescience of which overshadows the Virgin's gaze which, serious and indeterminate, stares far into time. A composition of imperial grandeur, constructed with extreme symmetry and formality, the size and position of the figures strictly ranked, it displays exceptional monumentality in tone and great beauty in the faces. A remarkable ornateness describes the figures with dynamic gravity and a serene, monumental rhythm portends the style of the thirteenth century.

Orlandos 1970, 78ff., 121ff.

*51. The Hospitality of Abraham (Holy Trinity), late 12th cent.*

*Patmos, Monastery of St John the Theologian, chapel of the Panayia (sanctuary, east wall).*

In the original painting programme in the chapel of the Panayia the Theotokos and the Holy Trinity are honoured in the sanctuary, while the miracles of Christ are represented on the ceiling and as far as the upper face of the west wall, where there is a composition of a hierarchy as 'Fount of Wisdom', rare for the period, as well as a host of saints below. The Hospitality of Abraham adorns the tympanum of the east wall, above the Virgin Enthroned and on a smaller scale. It is accompanied by the inscription 'The Holy Trinity', of which the scene is a symbolic representation. Its mystical, soteriological and eucharistic meaning explains the position of the biblical theophany in the sanctuary, where it is to be found already in the sixth century, as well as its subsequent frequent appearance in Palaiologan wall-paintings. Its position in the Patmos chapel, rare for the period, should be more specifically associated with the intense theological debate of the time. Imposing in its symbolic clarity and simplicity, the representation is devoid of any indication of landscape. The 'three men' and angels of the Lord of the Old Testament narration (Genesis XVIII) are portrayed in the centre with extraordinary symmetry of pose, blessing the table spread for them by Abraham, who comes over from the left to serve them. The middle angel, in frontal pose, is prominent, with purple chiton and deep blue himation like Christ, holding the closed scroll instead of the sceptre of the others. With attractive, youthful faces, vigorous modelling and powerful gaze, the heavenly messengers in ceremonially draped garments are exalted serenely with the span of

their wings, within the shelter of which, on a smaller scale, moves the decorous elder, with the full, dynamic finial of his himation.

Orlandos 1970, 132ff.

*52. St James the Brother of the Lord, late 12th cent.*

*Patmos, Monastery of St John the Theologian, chapel of the Panayia (sanctuary, north wall).*

Portrayed at the beginning of the north wall in the sanctuary of the chapel of the Panayia, St James the Brother of the Lord with the deacon, St Stephen the Protomartyr, accompanying him at the side and censing in front, concelebrates with two anonymous hierarchs of Jerusalem on the opposite south wall. A very tall, slim, grey-haired, old man, in plain phelonion and omophorion, the first bishop of the Church of Jerusalem inclines towards the enthroned Virgin with Christ, with restrained rightwards movement and deep bow of the head, reading the blessing of the oblation written in his scroll. Like the hair, the vestments flutter out discreetly, their folds arranged in long, linear, pliant sheaves which embellish the surface of the material, decorated with different shades of colour and its volumes delicately emphasized in the light. The venerable hierarch's serious and dignified countenance is graven with wrinkles of meditation and wisdom; the gaze is emitted in a holy vision with compliance and compassion for things human. In the wide cycle of saints, standing and in medallions, depicted on the long walls and on the arches of the chapel, nine full-length hierarchs, all bishops and patriarchs of Jerusalem, dominate. In a unique assemblage, significantly placed in the tall, bottom zone of the walls, they are represented concelebrant in the sanctuary, led by St James the Brother of the Lord, and in formal alignment and frontal pose in the nave. The inscriptions with the name have fallen down from most of the surviving figures.

Mouriki 1987-88, 209ff.

*53. Christ and the Samaritan Woman, late 12th cent.*

*Patmos, Monastery of St John the Theologian, chapel of the Panayia (sanctuary vault).*

Christ's encounter with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well is depicted on the north side of the sanctuary vault. There is hieratic insistence on the differential sizes of the figures, as in the Hospitality of Abraham, and on the corresponding colour characterization of the garments, those



of the disciple and the woman of Samaria being pale. At the left, the young woman balancing the pitcher on the round mouth of the well replies spiritedly and cautiously to the wayfarer who sits with dignity, right. Christ blesses her with prophetic words, promising the 'water of life'. Beside him a disciple, possibly James the dear brother of the beloved John of the monastery, evidently expresses with eloquent gesture his disbelief and doubt, as a Jew, concerning Christ's affability towards the Samaritan woman. The scene is set with gravity and intensity, using a minimum of elements: in the foreground, the stone well and the column with stones on the bright green earth, in the background, a rounded mountain with a cluster of rocks at the summit, which sketches the elegant bushes and presents an illumined surface against which the princely stature of Christ is projected. Slim and elegant, flowing figures skilfully drawn with a perception of beauty, relaxed poses, grace and the clarity of line, leave no doubt that the painter of the wall-paintings in the Patmos chapel hailed from the Byzantine capital. The superior quality of Constantinopolitan art is also evident in the rhythmical and skilful composition, the typological assemblage and the concise meanings of the decoration.

Orlandos 1970, 143ff.

54. *A Hierarchy of Jerusalem, late 12th cent.*

*Patmos, Monastery of St John the Theologian, chapel of the Panayia (north wall).*

The hierarchs of Jerusalem adorning the bottom zone of the walls, full-length and impressive in size and appearance, preserving traces of gold on their haloes, directly link the unusual iconographic composition of the chapel with the saintly abbot of the Patmos monastery and Patriarch of Jerusalem, Leontios II (1176-1185). Leontios, whose election was particularly prestigious for the monastery, was not able to exercise his duties in Latin-occupied Jerusalem and resided in Constantinople from 1178, retaining responsibility for the monastery of the Theologian until 1183, when his disciple Arsenios was appointed abbot. These events explain the special preference for and honour accorded to the resplendent hierarchs and predecessors of Leontios on the Jerusalem throne. They also denote the close contact, in that period, between the Patmos foundation and the Capital, from where outstanding artists came to decorate its buildings. Consequently, the execution of the paintings in the chapel

is appropriately dated after 1178, when Leontios had settled in Constantinople, and probably after 1183, when Arsenios assumed the abbacy. In the latter case, it is possible that the chapel was decorated under Leontios's guidance, taking account of his aspirations for the articulation of the iconographic programme, between the years 1183 and 1185. It is also equally likely that it was undertaken on the initiative of the active Arsenios, after Leontios's death in 1185, to honour both his spiritual mentor and the monastery, in connection with the elevation of Leontios to the status of *hiosios* and the subsequent writing of his *Life*. No representation of Leontios in the chapel, which would affirm this second viewpoint, has been noted.

Mouriki 1987-88, 205ff.

55. *St Hilarion, late 12th cent.*

*Patmos, Monastery of St John the Theologian, refectory (west wall).*

The remodelling of the spacious refectory with central dome and vaults, during the second building phase, necessitated the reinforcement of the walls with an internal addition which was decorated with important wall-paintings in the thirteenth century. The new walls concealed the original wall-paintings, contemporary with the chapel of the Panayia, a small part of which has been revealed on the east side, on a section of the old wall used as a face of the north conch.

Of the original wall-paintings of the refectory, the third figure from the left, St Hilarion, is impressive, particularly in his torsional pose in relation to the adjacent saints, so that he gazes at the viewer askance. A handsome figure of sculptural force, like Chariton (no. 56), his face has the same chiselled aspect, with linear rendering of the clearly shaped volumes and a mild yet serious expression, rather despondent, engendering internal concentration and spirituality, as on the saints in the chapel of the Panayia. The type of facial features, hairstyle and beard, the formation of the wrinkles, analogous with those of Salustios and Makarios of Jerusalem, and the coloration and illumination do not vary essentially from those of the saints in the chapel. However the style is livelier, the relief stronger and more dynamically articulated in the refectory, the painting of which must postdate that of the chapel. The chapel painter's penchant for softer and sober modelling of the faces, rouged with characteristic prominent red spots on the cheeks, and for extravagance of line on the hair and beard, is here reversed. The face is shaped and boldly



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Orlandos 1970, 178ff.

56. *St Chariton, late 12th cent.*

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The original wall-paintings are among the earliest, and the very few Byzantine paintings to have survived in a monastery refectory. They include fragmentary representations of saints Euthymios, Chariton, Hilarion and an anonymous one, exemplars for the monks, below, and of the Miraculous Draught of Fishes and the Feeding of the Five Thousand in the second zone, which were repeated higher up in the next painting phase. The four saints, originally full-length and all bare-headed, stand comfortably in space on the deep bright blue ground. Their lively poses of dialogue, dynamic *contrapposto* and monumental air link them among themselves, as well as with the monks of the monastery, to whom they directed advice on the scrolls they held. St Chariton, second from the left, is an imposing figure with upright carriage and powerful pose, turning towards his neighbour. A sprightly old man, of handsome mien, with vital gaze and decisive, irascible air, he emits the force of spiritual discipline, courage and sound judgement.

Orlandos 1970, 175ff.

57. *The Virgin Enthroned with Archangels, 1191.*

*Kurbinovo, Ayios Georgios (sanctuary apse, semi-dome).*

The architectural simplicity of the rectangular, aisleless, timber-roofed church of Ayios Georgios, near Lake Prespa, is in striking contrast to its splendid painted decoration, which even extends over surfaces of its exterior. An inscription on the altar notes the commencement of painting immediately after the church's patronal feast, on 25 April 1191. The decoration is developed with absolute symmetry, balance and clarity of iconographic articulation in its successive zones.

Dominating the semi-dome of the large sanctuary apse, is the Virgin Nikopoios, according to the inscription, seated on a heavy, elaborate throne, holding the Christ Child and flanked by the venerating archangels Michael and Gabriel, who accompany her in her glory. In the barrel-vault

below, eight hierarchs concelebrate in the Melismos, where the sacrificed Christ, the Lamb of God, is depicted for the first time. The Virgin energetically cradles the recumbent Child in her arms, his pose alluding to the Anapeson. An inscription from the sixth canon of the *Oktoechos*, running across the face of the apse, lauds the Perpetual Virgin 'pure before confinement and after birth' and exalts the concept of the Incarnation. The archangels Michael and Gabriel 'are shown servilely' at the sides, as representatives of the suitably astonished heavenly orders of the canon. Very tall and willowy, clad in ancient himatia and regal, pearl-encrusted shoes, they bow slightly with wings erect, their stance ingeniously following the curvature of the arch. Inspired figures of supernatural stature and extreme stylisation, the gentle drapery of the garments revealing the harsh joints of the limbs beneath and tumbling down in dense, wavering finials, they epitomize the unbridled excess of the dynamic Late Comnenian style.

Hadermann-Misguich 1975, 53ff.

58. *The Anastasis, 1191.*

*Kurbinovo, Ayios Georgios (sanctuary, north wall).*

The last representation on the north wall of the sanctuary, Christ's Descent into Hell concludes in its triumphant note and abstruse soteriological meaning, the brief cycle from the Passion and the Resurrection illustrated on this side in the thematic synthesis familiar for the age. The Descent into Hell, with which Byzantine art has always rendered the Anastasis, is one of the loveliest representations in the church, its iconography including many avant-garde elements. Structured on principles of geometric symmetry and stability, it gleams with the victorious and philanthropical light of life, powerfully motivated by the heavenly mandorla of Christ, who totally dominates the realm of Hades. The mountains soar in the distance with heavy curves and small, fragmented flat stones on the summit. In the dark cavern below, the coffins have been pushed aside, the gates broken and the locks scattered in front. The Lord descends impetuously, shedding heavenly radiance round Hell and holding the cross with the crown of thorns, whereon were nailed the sins of the world, and draws forth with his right hand the forefather Adam. The dramatic quality of the light and the triumphant hyperbole of Christ's movement in the diagonal ray of the mandorla, which is echoed in successive waves of folds on the hima-



of the disciple and the woman of Samaria being pale. At the left, the young woman balancing the pitcher on the round mouth of the well replies spiritedly and cautiously to the wayfarer who sits with dignity, right. Christ blesses her with prophetic words, promising the 'water of life'. Beside him a disciple, possibly James the dear brother of the beloved John of the monastery, evidently expresses with eloquent gesture his disbelief and doubt, as a Jew, concerning Christ's affability towards the Samaritan woman. The scene is set with gravity and intensity, using a minimum of elements: in the foreground, the stone well and the column with stones on the bright green earth, in the background, a rounded mountain with a cluster of rocks at the summit, which sketches the elegant bushes and presents an illumined surface against which the princely stature of Christ is projected. Slim and elegant, flowing figures skilfully drawn with a perception of beauty, relaxed poses, grace and the clarity of line, leave no doubt that the painter of the wall-paintings in the Patmos chapel hailed from the Byzantine capital. The superior quality of Constantinopolitan art is also evident in the rhythmical and skilful composition, the typological assemblage and the concise meanings of the decoration.

Orlandos 1970, 143ff.

54. *A Hierarchy of Jerusalem, late 12th cent.*

*Patmos, Monastery of St John the Theologian, chapel of the Panayia (north wall).*

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Hademann-Misguich 1975, 53ff.

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tia and transmitted to Adam with the force of life, surpass the intense decorativeness of the icon. Eve with Abel, right, and the prophet kings David and Solomon, with St John the Baptist, left, bear witness to the joy of redemption, bearing the beacon of the expectation of eternal life.

Hademmann-Misguich 1975, 162ff.

59. *The Annunciation, 1191.*

*Kurbinovo, Ayios Georgios (nave, east wall).*

The Annunciation is depicted on the face of the east wall, in the established position for the representation revealing the Incarnation, the first in the cycle of gospel feasts, with the archangel Gabriel to the left and Mary to the right of the apse. The Virgin, seated on the throne of a queen, spinning purple yarn in her house, turns confounded and responds to the salutation of the archangel, while the Holy Spirit is sent down in a ray of light. The house in Nazareth, a rich, formal building which rises behind, defines the earthly environment, and the closed garden on its flat roof symbolizes the Virgin's chastity. At the left, the archangel Gabriel floats in the blue of heaven, barely alighting on the ground, with tidings of joy that vibrate the air with delicate torsions of the captivating figure and multicoloured wings held high. Holding a sceptre, attribute of a divine messenger, in one hand, he extends the other in a gesture of speech towards Mary. The movement is encircled and balanced by a torrent of folds, forming an agitated, calligraphic bustle behind and a deep cascade in front.

Hademmann-Misguich 1975, 96ff.

60. *The Embracing of Mary and Elisabeth, 1191.*

*Kurbinovo, Ayios Georgios (sanctuary, south wall).*

The representation belongs to the Mariological ones and is only rarely included in the Christological cycle in church decoration, as here. Painted at the beginning of the south wall, in the area of the sanctuary, it opens the series of gospel compositions occupying the zone above the saints, as far as the end of the north wall, and culminating in the Ascension and Pentecost on the gables of the narrow sides. The doctrinal significance of the Embracing is developed in a unique manner, linked with the articulation of the iconographic programme in Ayios Georgios as a diptych of symmetrical scenes connected by a continuous wall in the architectural backdrop and composing, together with the Dormition of the Virgin on the west side, a syn-

optic Mariological cycle. The two scenes are separated by a window above. At the left is the Embracing, and at the right, Mary and Elisabeth, seated facing one another, animatedly discuss the incomprehensible and inexplicable miracle. The Virgin, a beautiful maiden with deep red dots of eternal youth on her cheeks, arrives at Zacharias's house, indicated by two domed towers at the ends of the isodomic wall above, joined by a festive cloth hung out between them and symmetrically replicated in the other scene, and clasps her aged relative in warm embrace. Both figures are of supernatural stature, conjoined in an impulsive group with identical gestures and pose, gracefully taking off into the ornamented space, with the joyous emotion of the encounter captured in the wonderful, loquacious flow of finely drawn folds towards the bottom of the garment.

Hademmann-Misguich 1975, 103ff.

61-62. *The Virgin Enthroned with Archangels, 1192.*

*Cyprus, Lagoudera, Panayia Arakou (sanctuary apse).*

The 'most venerable church of the All Holy Mother of God of Arakos' – a domed, aisleless, Greek-cross structure – close to the village of Lagoudera, was decorated 'διά συνδρομῆς καὶ πολλοῦ πόθου κυροῦ Λέοντος τοῦ Αὐθέντου' (through the contribution and great desire of Sire Leon the Authentos), according to the foundation inscription. Though it is not known exactly when this splendid project commenced, it was certainly completed by December 1192, after the Crusaders of King Richard the Lionheart had captured Cyprus the previous year (1191). The wall-paintings are preserved virtually *in toto*: only a section has been lost to the west, in an extension of the church.

The wall-paintings in the sanctuary apse, with the Virgin Enthroned and Child, and the hierarchs below, full-length and in bust on a red ground, reveal the hand of another painter, on a par with the one who eventually executed the decoration but who was, for reasons unknown, prevented from continuing the task. His accomplished technique, strong, decorative and elegant, belongs, like that of the artist who succeeded him, to the Late Comnenian *koine* dramatically exalted in the closing years of the century. The Virgin, on a luxurious, lavishly embellished throne with wide footstool, holds Christ before her in frontal pose, sitting and blessing. To left and right are the venerating archangels, Gabriel and Michael. Deep crim-



son dominates the rhythmical conduct of the work, its dynamic contrast boldly emphasizing the broad shadowy planes on the whitish himatia, wings and sceptres of the archangels. Noble figures, tall of stature and serious in mien, their movement is enhanced by the relief effect of their richly draped garments. The archangel Gabriel, with his impressive ambulatory pose, brings to mind the Annunciation, underlining the concept of the Incarnation, as formally expressed in the composition in the apse.

Stylianou 1985, 157ff.

*63-64. Christ Pantokrator with Angels and Prophets, 1192.*

*Cyprus, Lagoudera, Panayia Arakou (nave, dome).*

The outstanding parietal art in the Panayia Arakou is probably the work of a Constantinopolitan painter, like those who offered their services on Cyprus in the early years of the century in the Monastery of Chrysostomos at Koutsovendis and perhaps in the Panayia Asinou and Panayia Trikomou. He is probably to be identified with Theodoros Apseudes, who in 1183 decorated the Enkleistra of Neophytos at Ktima, Paphos, in view of the host of stylistic and technical traits common to both monuments. The lush art in the Enkleistra, always impetuous in its dynamic formulation, acquires more significant, erudite tones in the calligraphic decorousness and contrived beauty in the later church, as befitting the *archon* Leon Authentes.

A magnificent composition, the fullest and most extensive known from the twelfth century, adorns the dome. Christ is depicted in the eye, in bust, in the established type of the Pantokrator. 'The All-Seeing ... knows thy souls and hearts, mortals fear the Righteous Judge', according to the inscription around him in the church of the Panayia Trikomou, possibly a work of the painter of the Asinou church. His apocalyptic figure, of crystalline clarity, is glorified as appropriate to imperial iconography by the red ground of his disc, known from the seventh century in the dome of the Panayia Drosiani and in later, eleventh-century churches on Naxos. This same red blazes with divine fire on the discs of the Preparation of the Throne (Hetoimasia) in the next cycle, and of Christ Emmanuel further down, alternating in a decorative symphony with the blue and green in the medallions of the angels encircling the Lord. The ten angels in bust, in harmony with the host of saints in circular medallions in the painting programme of the church, some in royal raiment and holding

an orb, others in ancient himatia, are arranged in two groups, venerating the throne of the Hetoimasia, which symbolizes the Holy Trinity. In the tympanum below, twelve full-length prophets in pairs, face one another across the dome: Jeremiah and Isaiah, Solomon and David, Elijah and Moses, Elisha and Jonah, Daniel and Ezekiel, Gideon and Habakkuk. In whirling motion they raise their scrolls in ecstasy, singing hymns to the omnipotence, the glory and the redemptive power of God and of the Word made Flesh, as well as to the grace of the Virgin to whom the church is dedicated, with her exalted place in the Incarnation.

Papamastorakis 1985, 71ff.

*65. The Nativity, 1192.*

*Cyprus, Lagoudera, Panayia Arakou (nave, west vault).*

The few narrative representations in the church include the Nativity on the south side of the west vault. Placed opposite the Anastasis, it is a harbinger of hope at the entrance to the nave, a polyphonic proclamation of the redemptive message of the decoration. The Nativity 'flies' upon the wings of the angels who slash the blinding blue of heaven; the Virgin, sitting up on her white mattress in the dark mouth of the cave, juxtaposes the symbol of the Incarnation in the majesty of Christ to the light of the Resurrection in the himation. The various episodes of this joyful event are depicted against the warm colour of the sun-baked mountain landscape. The angel points out the star of Bethlehem to the travellers, left, and under the Virgin's serene gaze the Magi, in descending order of age, present their gifts to the divine infant in the manger, which is warmed by the breath of the animals. Two angels pay homage with hymns and another, right, addresses the shepherds in the fields; the carefree young lad on the mountainside, whiling away the lonely hours by playing on his pipe; and the old man and the youth below, beholding the miracle: 'Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people' (Luke II:10). The animals are in symmetrical groups among the trees. To the fore, elegant young women, the midwife in conversation with Salome, attend the bath of the infant Jesus, already in the stoup. The righteous Joseph sits at the edge, deep in contemplation. Near him stands the tethered donkey, the mount of the Virgin Mary, a rare detail which, like the animal's water-trough far right, will have been enjoyed by those dwelling in the Troodos range.



66-68. *The Ascension, 1192.*

*Cyprus, Lagoudera, Panayia Arakou (sanctuary vault).*

The Ascension fills the sanctuary vault, in the established position, with Christ in a heavenly mandorla on high and groups of apostles on the sides. A broad greenish zone, a continuation of the ground in the two apostolic groups, shares the space above with the bright blue background in an unusual manner, creating the impression of Christ ascending between earth and heaven. An impression heightened by the pose of the four angels bearing up the mandorla, their wings plastically rendered in lavish colour. For reasons of compositional symmetry, the Virgin and just one angel occupy the central position in each group of apostles respectively. The figures are meticulously drawn with impeccable line and the colours clear and dulcet. There is a grandeur in gestures and poses, and the heavy folds echo the movement in this scene of apocalyptic lucidity.

69. *Christ the Antiphonitis, 1192.*

*Cyprus, Lagoudera, Panayia Arakou (nave, east wall).*

In the well of the church where the faithful congregate before the sanctuary, succinct and grandiloquent theological ideas of the turn of the twelfth century are developed. On the south side, the Virgin of the Passion and the formal figure of the Archangel Michael with banner and globus crucifer; on the north, St John the Baptist, Symeon the Theodochos with the infant Christ as in the Presentation in the Temple, the Holy Keramion with the foundation inscription, and the hierarch Nikolaos; on the east are affixed the Virgin with the eponym Eleousa and Christ the Antiphonitis referring with meanings of seminal importance to the salvatory work of the Divine Economy. On the jambs of the iconostasis, in the type of devotional icons, the Virgin Eleousa, turned right, addresses Christ in supplication, the words of their dialogue written in her scroll, and the Antiphonitis replies: 'What dost thou seek Mother. The salvation of mortals. They have angered me much. Forgive them my son...'. St John the Baptist, with the words 'Behold the Lamb of God' on his scroll, adjacent to the Eleousa, in keeping with the schema of the Deesis (Trimorph) – just as in Ayios Georgios at Kurbinovo – is at the same time associated, through the prophecy in his scroll, with Symeon and the Virgin of the Passion opposite. Christ the Antiphonitis, a majestic figure in frontal pose in the type of the Pantokrator, proximate to the Virgin of the Passion and with the red of sacrifice and of life also abun-

dant on his garments and the bejewelled footstool, blesses. With open gospel book, the Lord, the 'Light of the World', promises the 'Light of Life'. Stately and slender, of splendid clarity and calligraphic form, his fine-featured face is suffused with compassion and grief for the woes of the world.

70. *The Virgin Arakiotissa, 1192.*

*Cyprus, Lagoudera, Panayia Arakou (nave, south cross arm).*

The decoration in the central part of the nave is dedicated to the Mother of God, with the Presentation and the Dormition of the Virgin on the tympanum of the north and the south arms of the cross respectively, and representations of her below. Portrayed on the south side, under the Dormition and close to the iconostasis, is the 'Mother of God the Arakiotissa and Full of Grace', the devotional and eponymous icon of the church. The Virgin, tall and slender, standing erect in front of her royal throne, holds in her arms the recumbent Christ, as the Anapeson, with the hands in a mystical 'grip', alluding to the sacrament of the Eucharist. With maternal tenderness she inclines her head lovingly towards her son, submissive to the will of God; tragic mother of man, gazing into the depths of her troubled soul at the moment the angels above are bringing the symbols of the Passion. The child, in the semantics of the Passion with bare feet crossed and the sole turned outwards, 'as maker of the law fulfilling the law', wearing the 'earring of the law', the lamb sacrificed, 'for the salvation of the world' blesses the Virgin and holds a red scroll in the other hand. This is the first known appearance of the Virgin of the Passion, in whom Leon Authentes chose to invest his hopes at an unhappy time for Cyprus, for himself and for his familiars. On the ground is the many-lined inscription: '+ Ἀχραντον ὁ σὴν ἐκμορφώσας εἰκόνα χρώμασι φθαρτοῖς... Λέων πενιχρός εὐτελής σὸς οἰκέτης... σὺν ὁμοζύγῳ καὶ σὺν δούλῃ αἰτοῦσι πιστῶς δάκρυσιν ἀμέτροις εὐθυμον εὐρεῖν θείου λοιποῦ τό πέρας, σὺν ὁμοδούλοις καὶ παισὶ σοῖς οἰκέταις καὶ λήξεως τύχουσι τῶν σεσωσμένων...' (He who has helped to portray in perishable colours thine undefiled icon ... Leon, your poor and worthless suppliant ... together with his wife and servant request faithfully and with countless tears that they, with the fellow servants and children, thy suppliants, may pass the rest of their life in happiness, and that they may, in the end, be favoured among the saved...).

Sotiriou 1953-54, 87ff. Pallas 1965, 173ff. Baltoyanni 1993-94.



71. Nikolaos, *St John the Baptist*, 1208/9.  
*Studenica Monastery, katholikon (nave, NW pillar).*

The grand church dedicated to the Virgin the Evergetis (Benefactress), katholikon of the royal Studenica Monastery, was built by Stefan Nemanja. It is an aisleless, Greek-cross church with dome and narthex, to which an exonarthex and chapels were added slightly later. A foundation inscription in gold letters, at the base of the dome, mentions Nemanja's younger son and abbot of the monastery, St Sabbas, who commissioned the mural decoration, and dates the original wall-paintings in the church to 1208/9. Further down, close to the representation of the Holy Mandelion, is the barely legible signature of the Greek master-painter Nikolaos.

St John the Baptist is depicted full-length and in frontal pose, in the first register of decoration on the south side of the north-west of the four pillars upholding the arches on which rests the dome. His figure, in the familiar, twelfth-century Constantinopolitan type, is projected below an ornamented arch in the format of a devotional icon. Tall and lean, with long limbs, his right hand on his chest in a gesture of speech and the left lowered, holding a cruciferous staff and proffering an inscribed scroll of his preaching, he is projected against the deep blue ground. Much of the emaciated body of the hermit in the wilderness – a large part of the chest and the thighs – is exposed by the olive-green himation trimmed with fur, reminiscent of the sheepskin, the heavy folds emphasizing the limbs. The free and supple *contrapposto* of his stance betrays vigilance; the long, narrow face with its smooth, soft modelling, the thick beard and dishevelled hair falling in curls on the shoulders, the knitted eyebrows and intense, askance gaze, render with artistic dexterity the austere ethos, spiritual fervour and impetuous nature of the prophet, as well as the merciful disposition of Christ's mediator.

Ćirković - Korać - Babić 1986, 10ff.

72. Nikolaos, *The Crucifixion*, 1208/9.  
*Studenica Monastery, katholikon (nave, west wall).*

In the large central panel on the west wall of the nave is the Crucifixion, depicted with striking symmetry, hieratic monumentality and a nobility of pathos befitting the divine, against the deep blue sky spangled with golden stars. 'The sun and moon grow dark, And the stars diminish

their brightness.' Joel's prophecy (II:10) vividly imprints on the icon the glorious moment of sacrifice and triumph. On a smaller scale are the personifications, known in eleventh-century art, of the Ekklesia-New Testament and the Synagogue-Old Testament, kept at bay by the second angel, right; at the upper edges are Moses and Isaiah with prophecies written in their scrolls; beside the cross the angels, who 'are seized with fear', intensify the meaning of the Crucifixion with delicate rhetorical interventions, in a correspondence of words and hymns of the Church. The deceased Christ towers above on the weighty cross. Close by below, the Virgin with her female companions, in dignified pose, bitterly laments, 'alas, the light of the world', while St John on the other side mourns with fortitude and propriety. The haloed centurion, with the Jews behind him, confesses the truth of the Son of God. The decorative surface of the wall of Jerusalem in the background demarcates the earthly horizon in the spiritual environment of the event. The masterpiece at Studenica, very probably the work of a Constantinopolitan painter, treats elements of monumental Comnenian style with a simplicity and a modelled clarity that define the new artistic form at the dawn of the thirteenth century.

Ćirković - Korać - Babić 1986, 73ff.

73-74. *The Crucifixion*, first decades of the 13th cent.  
*Kastoria, Panayia Mavriotissa (nave, west wall).*

The aisleless, timber-roofed church with narthex and later chapel, once the katholikon of the Monastery of the Virgin Mavriotissa or Mesonisiotissa, stands on the shore of the lake at Kastoria, a short distance from the town. Its decoration, from two periods of the thirteenth century, is preserved on large surfaces in the sanctuary and on the west side of the nave, in the narthex, and on the south side of the exterior.

The Crucifixion is depicted on the west wall of the nave and belongs to the first painting phase. Christ hangs lifeless from the cross, his contorted body naked save for a transparent loincloth. The Virgin, left, swoons in her anguish, held up by the first of her female companions to prevent her falling. At the right, the young St John mourns; further behind, the centurion raises his arm in witness; following him is a detachment of soldiers. The wall of Jerusalem is omitted and a church-like building is placed at the left. At the top are the sun and moon; in the middle the miniature personification of the Ekklesia collecting the blood and



water from Christ's wound; right, the Synagogue is ward-  
ed off by an angel, as at Studenica. The fainting Virgin,  
and soldiers with the lance and vinegar, caricature fig-  
ures in the Mavriotissa, and the centurion with the detach-  
ment behind, appear later in the aristocratic art of So-  
poćani, as elements of an iconographic type current at  
that time, which also inspires the Crucifixion in the refec-  
tory of the Patmos Monastery of St John the Theologian.  
An impressive and expressive representation in vivid  
colours, patently realistic in character, with a loosely struc-  
tured composition and an interesting perception of the  
disposition of figures in space, it constitutes an archaizing  
manifestation of a provincial artistic idiom whose presence  
here is pronounced.

Pelekanidis - Chatzidakis 1984, 50ff., 76ff.

*75-77. The Dormition of the Virgin, first decades  
of the 13th cent.*

*Kastoria, Panayia Mavriotissa (nave, west wall).*

The Dormition, above the entrance to the nave, extends  
across the entire width of the west wall. It is distinguished  
for its penchant for the decorative in the rich and detailed  
ornamentation of the Virgin's bier, on the loroi of the an-  
gels, right, with colourful haloes enhancing their counten-  
ance, and on the buildings. Innovative elements are  
adopted in the iconography of the theme: the formal pres-  
ence of the angels in regal raiment, as in the earlier  
Dormition of the Virgin in the Ayioi Anargyroi at Kastoria,  
headed by the archangel with the orb of the world; and  
the episode in the foreground, depicted in miniature, of  
the archangel cutting off Jephonias's hands because he  
tried to defile the body. These coexist with other archaic  
traits, such as the women lamenting in archways of build-  
ings on high, similar to those in the Panayia Asinou on  
Cyprus and elsewhere, while the double colonnettes with  
knots upholding the arches constitute a peculiar trait of  
thirteenth-century art. The buildings in the background are  
articulated in a realistic spirit with details such as the at-  
tractive casement right and the diverse chimney stacks on  
the flat roofs. The tall basin with ewer, placed in front of  
the death bed, is a motif unknown elsewhere. The pic-  
turesque row of buildings in the background is offset by  
the asymmetry due to the concentration of the apostles at  
the left, with intense poses of sorrow and the exaggerated  
linear inflation of Peter's and Andrew's limbs, in contrast  
to the compact, calm congregation of angels right, and

the stylistic dissonance of the two parts. Figures and build-  
ings make way for Christ, who towers in the middle, hold-  
ing his mother's soul just as she held him as a babe, and  
the angels fly up to the deep azure sky, their hands covered  
in reverence.

Pelekanidis - Chatzidakis 1984, 77ff.

*78. The Holy Women at the Tomb, 1222-1228.*

*Mileseva Monastery, katholikon (nave, west cross arm).*

The church of the Ascension, an aisleless, Greek-cross,  
domed structure with a narthex and a slightly later exo-  
narthex, katholikon of the Mileseva Monastery, was a  
foundation of King Vladislav before he came to power.  
The probable portrayal of the young Byzantine Emperor  
of Nikaia from 1222, John III Vatatzes, in the narthex op-  
posite the figures of the Nemanids, and the identification  
of the two crowned figures among them as the King of the  
Serbs, Stefan Provcenani (†1228), and the co-regent  
Radoslav, brother of Vladislav, date the wonderful decora-  
tion at Mileseva to the third decade of the thirteenth cen-  
tury.

On the south side of the west arm of the cross, the ded-  
icatory scene showing the Virgin leading Vladislav by the  
hand, with the model of the church, to the enthroned  
Christ who blesses him, encapsulates the idea of reward  
for an offering pleasing to God. There is an obvious aff-  
inity of meaning with the magnificent composition of the  
Holy Women at the Tomb in the overlying register, which  
proclaims the good news of the resurrection. According  
to the passage in Matthew's gospel (XXVIII:1-8) the  
angel, left, sitting on the stone in calm *contrapposto*, in-  
dicates Christ's empty tomb to the holy women, who with-  
draw in terror on beholding the sight, and commands them  
to tell the disciples that the Lord 'is risen from the dead'.  
On the earth in front, on a smaller scale, the custodians of  
the tomb, in heavy panoply with shields, lie as if dead,  
their poses knitting a long decorative chain. The superb  
angel, whose 'countenance was like lightning and his  
clothing white as snow', illumines the church with the  
heavenly mien, heroic size, and the beauty and serene  
grace of his white-clad figure, modelled with golden high-  
lights, directly opposite on the gold ground, the outspread  
wings completing the princely movement and declaring  
the triumph of life. Their span shelters Mary Magdalene  
and 'the other Mary', still in a pose of fear, illuminating  
them and giving them courage. Their span shelters the



faithful, too, who receive with hope the salvatory tidings of the Anastasis.

Radojčić 1963, 63ff. Babić 1987, 15ff. Petković 1987, 8.

79. *The Annunciation, 1222-1228.*

*Mileseva Monastery, katholikon (sanctuary, east wall).*

The Virgin in the Annunciation, in front of the sanctuary apse, right, sitting in her home spinning purple yarn, receives the visit of the archangel, who is depicted on the other side of the apse. Her house, high up on the gold ground, is a church, her seat a royal throne studded with pearls and precious stones, and the Word of God with the Holy Spirit, which 'overshadow' the Virgin, are a broad sunbeam. The modest, slightly backwards pose reveals the agitation caused by Gabriel's sudden appearance and the 'Salutation'; her face is suffused with the ecstasy of purity, jubilation of the spirit, and the simple beauty of the soul; humble, eager submission to the will of the Highest. The deep blue maphorion swathes her body with modelled grace, the dense folds outlined in gold emphasizing the statuesque, supernatural and spiritual stature of the Virgin, who is extolled as an animate shrine of Christ, King of All.

80. *The Dormition of the Virgin, 1222-1228.*

*Mileseva Monastery, katholikon (nave, west wall).*

Of the large wall-painting of the Dormition of the Virgin on the west wall of the nave only the end sections are preserved, with three apostles on each side and parts of others, in front of church-like buildings which delimit the composition diagonally. One apostle at the left and two at the right hold a book with precious gem-and pearl-studded binding; they are the evangelists. On the balustraded, vaulted veranda, on the façade of the building at the top left, two lamenting women appear. The disciples, in sparse, free arrangement and position parallel with the buildings, express with dignity their grief at Mary's dormition; they have meditative, measured movements and psychic intensity in the countenance, as emotion wells up in the gaze, creeps in deep wrinkles on the brow, furrows the cheeks and embitters the corners of the mouth. The young disciple behind the others, left, rests his face in sorrow on clenched hands covered by the light green himation – in a familiar iconographic device of an earlier period – tender and sensitive, still green and inexperienced in the impasse of mourning. Higher up, the heads of the two wo-

men in bust, rendered in miniature, incline towards each other in a heraldic schema of lamentation. The apostles are solid, robust figures of imposing stature and bold character, emanating a strength of human feeling in high tones of spiritual expression and painterly interpretation.

81. *The 'Chairete', c.1250.*

*Arta, Vlacherna Monastery, katholikon (nave, NW bay).*

The imposing katholikon of the former convent 'of the Vlachernitissa' stands in the village of Vlacherna, opposite Arta. Originally a three-aisled basilica, it was remodelled around the middle of the thirteenth century, under the despot Michael II (1231-1269), as a domed, cross-in-square church with two satellite domes on the transverse arm of the cross. Towards the end of the century a narthex was added. The wall-paintings discovered in the nave and the narthex date respectively from these two building phases.

The representation of the 'Chairete', monumental in scale, is included in the events of the Resurrection, which were depicted in the north-west bay of the church, and covers the south side of the vault. At the left and right of the background to the scene, two mountains, pinkish and greenish in colour respectively, diverge at the edges, their mass convoluted with bright curvaceous zones, terminating in a little cluster of cuboid rocks on the summit. In the garden below, among the trees whose dense foliage and blossoming branches variegates the view of the barren massifs, Christ appears 'Saluting the Holy Women', as the inscription reads. The Three Marys were depicted in that part of the wall-painting now lost. Christ, transcendent in sublime majesty, rising above the mountains of the temporal world, is clad in a purple chiton and a bright blue himation that blends into the hue of the heavenly sphere, where his divine figure projects with princely stature and stars on the halo. The arrangement of his himation and the manner of his gestures lend to the scene of the 'Chairete' an extremely unusual iconographic presence, like that of the Pantokrator, expressive of the divine nature which becomes immaterial, bathing his face in blue light. The monumental mien, the elation in colour, the heroic tone and modelled grace, the calmness and serenity, form a representation of rare aesthetic merit in the spirit of the mid-thirteenth century.

Acheimastou-Potamianou 1992, 184.



82. *The Incredulity of Thomas*, c.1250.

Arta, Vlacherna Monastery, *katholikon* (nave, NW bay).

The scenes of the Passion depicted in the south-west bay of the *katholikon* and those of events after the Resurrection in the north-west, in accordance with the festal calendar of the Church, are consistent with the sepulchral use of these areas, which house marble sarcophagi of the Comnenoi and Doukai despots of Arta. The sense of monumental grandeur and courtly luxury emanating from the high-quality decoration also signifies the importance of the church-mausoleum of the rulers of the 'western' state. Opposite the 'Chairete', on the north side of the north-west vault, the Incredulity of Thomas is illustrated in front of the face of a decorated wall that bounds the scene in the background. This wall has a monumental portal in the middle, a stained-glass lunette above and a purple cloth, symmetrically laid with elegant overfolds and knots, on the crowning course. The risen Christ unexpectedly appears in the midst of the terrified disciples, in front of the locked door, in erect, frontal pose, with the rare stars on the dark blue cross of his halo – as in all representations of the Resurrection cycle in the church – shedding light on the theophany. Thomas, left, with youthful boldness and respect touches the bared wound in the Lord's side and believes. The disciples' agitation and interest are conveyed in the gestures and poses which mobilize the rich drapery on the garments in diverse ways. The Incredulity of Thomas, probably the work of a different painter from the one of the Passion, juxtaposes to the melodic disposition of the latter a sophisticated perception of modelled style and realistic ethos that interpret in a contemporary spirit an iconographic type revived from the tenth century.

Acheimastou-Potamianou 1992, 184.

83. *The Judgement of Pilate*, c.1250.

Arta, Vlacherna Monastery, *katholikon* (nave, SW bay).

In the Judgement of Pilate the praetorium delimits the scene behind, heightening the dramatic impact of the events through the complex, symmetrical, tripartite arrangement of its single architectural form, as if belonging to a magnificent edifice. Pilate, seated right, with the authority of a ruler, directly addresses the exhausted Christ who, standing at the left edge of the scene, replies to his questions. Seated on thrones opposite Pilate are the gesturing figures of Annas and Caiaphas, forming, with the

standing Scribes and Pharisees in their entourage behind, a closed, dense, agitated group which presages the irrevocability of the governor's decision. This is registered in the idiomelon chanted at vespers on Maundy Thursday, written on the blue ground: 'The pen that will write the decision has already been dipped in the ink by the unjust judges'. A profuse palette, formal and decorative luxury, and the rich rhythm of the folds on the garments define the character of an art that displays the extravagance of courtly grandeur.

Acheimastou-Potamianou 1992, 182ff.

84-87. *The Ascension*, 1230-1240.

Peć, Ayioi Apostoloi (nave, dome).

The aisleless, domed Greek-cross church of the Ayioi Apostoloi at Peć, resulting from the rehabilitation of an existing building, attributed to the Bishop of Serbia Sabbas I, is the earliest of three churches in parallel arrangement between Ayios Demetrios and the Panayia. With the transfer of the Patriarchate from Zitsa to Peć (Ipekion) in the late thirteenth century Ayioi Apostoloi was elevated to a patriarchal church. Its rich decoration belongs mainly to the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries.

Depicted in the dome, instead of the Pantokrator, is the Ascension, as in churches in Thessaloniki and Constantinople, dated to the closing years of Sabbas I's term of office as archbishop of the Serbs, c.1232. Four gracefully flying angels uphold Christ's radiant mandorla, while in the surrounding tympanum, arranged in pairs between the large windows are the apostles, with the Virgin in an attitude of supplication and the archangels Michael and Gabriel, according to the nominatory inscription, at the head of their group. St Paul, next to Michael, holds a red book of his epistles. A magnificent, monumental composition of hieratic character, it extends over the deep-coloured background, bereft of topographical elements, only the green ground conventionally denoting the earthly sphere where the disciples who behold the Lord's ascent stand. Enigmatic discs, as of astral bodies, rotate above the windows, like those accompanying the image of the Pantokrator in the dome of the Taxiarchis at Thari on Rhodes, of the same period. Standing on a pearl-studded footstool is the exalted figure of the Virgin Orans, at once symbolic of the Incarnation and the Church, radiant in vibrant colours of youthful beauty, with the fresh and



wholesome face of a country maiden. The apostles react to the miraculous event in a variety of free and forceful gestures and poses, the linear folds on the garments following the motion and the plasticity of planes. Tall and compactly modelled, with firm facial features, they bespeak the talented painter's interest in physical proportions and accuracy of movement, while the charming angels and archangels have that sense of beauty observed in the figures at Mileseva.

Ljubinković 1964, lff., Vff.

88. *The Melismos, c.1260-1265.*

*Sopoćani, Ayia Triada (sanctuary apse).*

A royal foundation of King Uresis I and erstwhile katholikon of a monastery, the aisleless, domed Greek-cross church of the Ayia Triada at Sopoćani, with narthex, later exonarthex and chapels, is decorated with wall-paintings of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

In the large sanctuary apse, below the now-lost representation of the Virgin with angels in the semi-dome, the Communion of the Apostles and the Melismos, its established themes in the iconography of the Eucharist, are projected against the gold ground with ritualistic rhythm and monumental simplicity. The concelebrating hierarchs in the Melismos progress tardily in a long procession below, from the side walls of the sanctuary towards the centre, where lies the sacrificed Christ on the altar. Their groups are headed, as is usual, by the composers of the Divine Liturgy, St John the Chrysostom, left, and Basil the Great, right. In the rear, in ranked arrangement, are other Church Fathers, while three hierarchs on the side walls are identified as the archbishops of Serbia Sabbas I, Arsenios I and Sabbas II. Lofty and impressive, yet humble and serene figures in white prelatical vestments with intricate patterns of crosses on the *polystavria* phelonia and omo-phoria, all are in the same reverent pose of obeisance, all hold unfurled scrolls with blessings and all have the same direct penetrating gaze, in a composition imbued with the rhythmical syntax of spiritual majesty.

Djurić 1963, 111ff.

89. *A Holy Martyr, c.1260-1265.*

*Sopoćani, Ayia Triada (nave, SW pillar).*

In the monumental decoration of Sopoćani the major gospel feasts on the broad surfaces are harmonized in an

impressive ensemble of courtly grandeur with the army of saints, most frequently full-length, frontal and in successive serried ranks, which adorn not only the lower zone of the walls but also the narrow intervening surfaces in the upper registers, right up to the top. Hierarchs, Old Testament prophets and patriarchs, and martyrs are portrayed on the projecting pillars supporting the arches on which the dome rests. On the south-west pillar, in the third zone up on the south side, is an anonymous young male martyr, in serene, relaxed pose, holding his cloak lightly in front with his left hand and a cross with his right, openly at the side. His appearance is that of a youthful patrician, of comely stature, with masculine countenance and sumptuous attire. The gestures are gentle, the pose Classical, in rhythmical and symmetrical *contrapposto*, balanced between the gold ground and the gentle green of the earth. The cloak, in a lighter colour, contrasts elegantly with the 'bitter' orange on the belted robe. Broad gold bands and densely embroidered appliqués, dark streaks which cleverly denote the movement of the material on the heavy silk garment, freely modelled folds and broad, bright planes on the face, all endow the handsome figure of the martyr with painterly nobility, grace and strength.

90. *The Dormition of the Virgin, c.1260-1265.*

*Sopoćani, Ayia Triada (nave, west wall).*

A nonpareil composition with exquisite lambency of colour, extending over an immense surface of the west wall, magnifies the 'glorious dormition'. The light of the gold ground above enlivens figures and fluttering angels. In the middle, in an extremely rare appearance here, Christ descends to receive the soul of the Virgin, as narrated in the apocryphal gospels, seated in his starry mandorla, held by four angels. At the sides are the apostles, each one borne up to the clouds and guided by a guardian angel. Below, on a high bed with adornments worthy of a queen, the Virgin is glorified in the exodic hymns and the customs are observed with the utmost formality; the structuring of the groups is architectural and there is euphony in the modelling of the figures; with a noble pathos concentrated in the ranks of the apostles, a long drawn out movement is aroused, rolling slowly and broadly on the garments, painting emotion with outstanding dramatic quality and graving pain on the lonely faces with deep dignity. Lovely, ancient-style buildings at the sides define the grandiose environment in a perspective perception of



space, and on the roof of a porch of the left edifice is a group of mourning women. Near the immaculate body, censed by the hierarchs and venerated by Saints Paul and John the Theologian, is Christ, radiant in his mandorla, surrounded by his angels brandishing burning candles to light the Virgin's way heavenwards. With his mother's soul in his hands, which the archangel flying right comes to take, the merciful and philanthropic Lord gazes directly at the faithful with deepest sympathy. The painted masterpiece of Sopoćani, is a brilliant gem of Byzantine art with its modelled majesty, moral magnitude and epic spirit.

91. *The Preparation of the Throne, 1270-1285.*

*Mystras, Metropolis (sanctuary, diakonikon).*

The Metropolis, the oldest church at Mystras, dedicated to St Demetrios, was originally a three-aisled basilica. Through an intervention in the fifteenth century, catastrophic for the wall-paintings in the upper parts, a storey was added in the shape of a domed Greek-cross church, modelled on the Hodegetria and the Pantanassa. The wall-paintings, preserved over a considerable area, are distinguished into two broader chronological phases. Of a generally high artistic level and displaying a variety of manners and directions, they acquire, in association with the numerous epigraphic testimonies in the church, a special interest for the first and the second periods of Palaiologan painting respectively. The wall-paintings from the first painting phase, which are also the earliest at Mystras, decorate the area of the sanctuary and a significant part of the nave.

The central painted composition in the diakonikon is crowned by the apocalyptic Preparation of the Throne at the apex of the vault. An inextricable part of the Second Coming of Christ, connected with the vision of Daniel which is recorded lower down by the ode to the King of Glory and Just Judge, initiates into the mystery of the pure light of knowledge of God, with an image of heavenly magnificence. In its iconographic structure it recomposes and condenses with more complicated discourse the representation of the ceremonial procession of angels towards the Throne of the Hetoimasia which in Middle Byzantine churches, as well as those of the period of this monument, encircles the 'Lord of Hosts' in the zone of the dome below the Pantokrator. Dominant in the shimmering lambency of the heaven, contrived from concentric zones of light with stars affixed to the periphery, is the

Throne with the footstool, heavy, imposing, adorned with the red garment of Christ; with the cross and the other symbols of the Passion; with the dove of the Holy Spirit and the Gospel with burning binding, registering the invisible presence of the Word, which are suspended with the wine-stoup in the mystical shape of the lozenge above. 'Angels' and 'Authorities', three from each side, advance in homage towards the Throne upon which the Lord will sit in glory at the Last Judgement, the harmony of their intense contemplation completing the concentric, rhythmical and symmetrical composition.

Chatzidakis 1977-79, 159ff., and 1992, 25ff.

92. *Christ King of Glory, 1270-1285.*

*Mystras, Metropolis (sanctuary, diakonikon).*

Above the apse in the diakonikon, on the face of the east wall, Christ reigns on a throne of glory in an apocalyptic vision of the prophets Ezekiel and Joel, who look upon it with open scrolls at the edges below, an ode written between them referring to Daniel's vision and the terrible coming 'of the second Throne'. 'Many-eyed seraphim', 'six-winged cherubim' and wheels surround the throne, and the angelic hosts pay homage to the Lord, advancing in orders on the sides of the vault, 'Angels', 'Powers', 'Authorities' and 'Thrones', 'Principalities', 'Dominions' as their triads are inscribed. High in the vault is the Throne of the Hetoimasia, venerated by 'Angels' and 'Authorities'. The culminating eschatological composition in the area of the vault is linked with the next one, in which Christ is portrayed as 'All Merciful' in the apse, with Saints Cosmas and Damian praying to him below in the scenes of four of their miracles divided between the adjacent walls. The great mercy of the Lord is proclaimed in the Gospel-book which he holds (Matthew X:8), granting the apostles with the power of healing the sick, which is transferred to the Anargyroi, Saints Cosmas and Damian, who are honoured in the diakonikon of the Metropolis. On the north side below, next to St Panteleimon, is 'ὁ ἁγιώτατος μητροπολίτης Λακεδαιμονίας καὶ ἐθνικῶν ὑπέρτιμος ὁ Εὐγένιος' (the most holy metropolitan of Lacedaemonia and most honoured among the ethnics Eugenios) full-length, haloed and therefore deceased, in an attitude of supplication to Christ the All Merciful and the Just Judge, depicted above. Manifold symbols of a sagacious theological intellect are interwoven in the fabric of this iconographic tapestry which offers the majestic proces-



sion of angels to the glorificatory composition of the vault.  
Chatzidakis 1977-79, 158ff.

93. *The Last Judgement, 1291/92-1315.*  
*Mystras, Metropolis (narthex).*

The Last Judgement, in a large and detailed composition on the vaulted roof and the walls of the narthex, with the Just Judge and his entourage, the Preparation of the Throne and the angels reading the books of life, the resurrection of the dead, the torments of the damned and Paradise, summons the faithful to reflect upon the future 'then, when all creation will be judged by the Judge'. With this line, calling to prayer all 'those entering ... to stand then with the sheep on the right of the Judge', the proedros of Crete, Metropolitan of Lacedaemonia Nikephoros Moschopoulos (1288-1315) concludes his foundation inscription, incised on a marble plaque on the south exterior of the narthex west, in 1291/92. The year is also a terminus post quem for the wall-paintings in the narthex, which must not be much later. Below the magnificent Preparation of the Throne, on the west side of the vault opposite Christ in Glory, angels reading from the books of life for the Judgement (Revelation XX:12) are depicted on the jambs left and right of the entrance door. Their representation, quite rare, also occurs in the Last Judgement in the chapel of the Chora Monastery in Constantinople – though there the two angels with the open books stand beside the Judge, distinguished from the others in his retinue by their royal robes. Well preserved in the Metropolis, the reader of heaven at the right stands in vigilance with the large book wide open in front of him on a heavy, elegant lectern drawn in gold. A slender and gentle figure, his raised right wing sets the rhythmic tone of the composition.

Chatzidakis 1992, 42ff.

94. *The Martyrdom of St Demetrios, 1270-1285.*  
*Mystras, Metropolis (nave, north aisle).*

In the Metropolis, which honours St Demetrios, the wall-paintings in the prothesis, the chapel of the saint, are devoted to him. St Demetrios appears in bust, in the conch, in an attitude of supplication, with hierarchs below. Beginning from the face of the east wall, eleven scenes from the synaxarion of Demetrios are illustrated, alternating opposite in the two registers of compositions in the

vault and extending also to the north aisle, as far as the entrance doorway. At the left, the young saint, seated on a low throne, with his hands open in prayer, receives the thrusts of the javelins with which his executioners pierce his body. A domed, columned building, the jail, provides the archway in which his figure is projected. Further right, on a smaller scale, the four executioners, young men with blank expressions, perform their task with formal conscientiousness. Behind them, to dramatic effect, rises a massive mountain, with lines describing strange, rough, tortuous shapes, and balances the composition in the ochre light. The narrative is simple and lively, as in the miracles of Cosmas and Damian – by another painter – in the diakonikon, and there is an obvious penchant for the decorative and for formal precision in the elements. The figures, clean and heavy in their modelled texture, and features of the landscape equally belong in a common stylistic clime, being mingled more intensely with Gothic traits elsewhere in the painting of the church, which is rich in opinions and themes.

Chatzidakis 1977-79, 162ff.

95. *Miracle of Saints Cosmas and Damian, 1270-1285.*  
*Mystras, Metropolis (sanctuary, diakonikon).*

On the south side of the diakonikon, in the first of the cycle of their miracles, Saints Cosmas and Damian, the Anargyroi, cure Palladia. The incident is narrated in a clear, simple and synoptic composition. On the left are the doctor saints in priestly garments, on the right is the woman plagued by the affliction, sitting up modestly in bed, her hands in a gesture of supplication. Two maidens stand behind her. Beside Palladia is the bowl with three eggs, her humble gift for the cure which cost the younger of the Anargyroi, St Damian, so much. The position of the figures and the spatial components of the scene are defined on two planes, discreetly interlinked by diagonals converging towards the centre, giving weight to the persons and rhythm to the narration.

Chatzidakis 1977-79, 158, 161ff.

96-97. *Manuel Panselinos, the Virgin Enthroned, c.1290.*  
*Mount Athos, Protaton (iconostasis, north proskynetarion).*

The superb decoration in the Protaton, the cathedral church at Karyes, is attributed in Athonite tradition to 'Sire Manuel Panselinos from Thessaloniki, shining like the



moon, ... who ... surpassed and overshadowed with wondrous art all the earlier and later painters' (Painter's Manual), and is dated around 1300 or 1290. An inspired work, it is the antipode of the wall-paintings created by his contemporaries from Thessaloniki, Michael Astrapas and Eutychios, in St Clement at Ohrid in 1294/95, with which Panselinos's painting is closely linked in its means of modelling form. To the fullness and the calmness of the Classical that the decoration in the Protaton renders as a whole, is opposed the bulkiness, the dynamism and the agitation in St Clement, where utter transcendence has led to the extreme anticlassical style of the period.

The Protaton, a Middle Byzantine three-aisled basilica with wide middle aisle elevated as a clerestory, preserves its original marble iconostasis, decorated in the empty spaces above by two large proskynetaria with icons in wall-painting of Christ the Lord and of the Virgin, to whom the church is dedicated. The proskynetaria are formed on the narrow, navewards face of the walls which separate the sanctuary from the prothesis and the diakonikon, between the three sections of the iconostasis, with an arched, painted relief frame supported on coupled columns with knots. The place for the large mosaic and wall-painting icons of Christ and of the Virgin, usually standing, was traditional from Middle Byzantine times. The Virgin in the Protaton, in the north proskynetarion, is depicted, like Christ, enthroned, the back of her throne embellished with white embroidered material which enlivens her aspect. She holds the Child, left, at the side, sitting on her lap. Majestic and modest, formal and felicitous, her comfortably draped garments are 'with gold fringe bordered and brodered'. A beautiful figure of unblemished youth, she looks towards the faithful, his hope; she receives the supplications and intercedes with her 'Son and God', the fingertips of her left hand gently touching the Child's leg. And Christ, with serious yet merry disposition, in gold-embellished himatia, seated in the 'throne' of maternal affection, holds the scroll of the Word and blesses with his right hand raised, in a slight, tender response to the Virgin, while gazing at the believer.

98-99. *Manuel Panselinos, Christ Enthroned, c.1290.*  
*Mount Athos, Protaton (iconostasis, south proskynetarion).*

In the south proskynetarion, Christ seated on the throne of his kingdom blesses with his right hand in front, and with the left holds the open gospel-book supported sideways,

in which can be read the excerpt from Matthew, rare for the representation, (XI:29-30) 'learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy (and my burden is light)'. His countenance is brilliant, full of apocalyptic majesty and never-fading beauty, he illumines the faithful with the magnanimity of the Pantokrator. He 'the most holy', 'the pure and philanthropic', 'the living Son of God', 'meek ... lowly in heart', who promises 'rest for the souls'. His image, of unsurpassable beauty, in pale purple chiton and a himation deep blue as the ground, is inspired with a force of internal expression, glows with sweetness of character and spiritual fragrance. Balanced and rhythmical, imposing in the stance and the idea of the Pantokrator, a vital, organically modelled figure of Classical style, he can be compared with the most perfect creations of the Palaiologan era; in ethos, impact and above all Classical grace, approaching the figures at Sopoćani. The monumental wall-painting of Christ alone could bear witness to the greatness of the painting in the Protaton.

100-102. *Manuel Panselinos, the Baptism, c.1290.*  
*Mount Athos, Protaton (nave, central aisle).*

In the central aisle, in which the Cycle of the Twelve Feasts (Dodekaorton) is illustrated, the monumental Baptism on the south side is enriched with an introductory representation from the Baptism cycle, left in the background, which stresses St John the Baptist's testimony concerning Christ to the emissaries of the Pharisees. In the midst of the gathered crowd, Christ stands out as an impressive presence, to whom the Baptist on the opposite bank points with his finger. Above is the familiar excerpt (John I:26-27). Spanning the tributary in the scene, at the point of its confluence with the Jordan below, is a bridge on which three little children strike up a dance, delighting in the joyous event of the Baptism. The same mirthful image is observed later in the Athonite Monastery of Chelandari; in the Metropolis at Veroia, in a picturesque assemblage there of small 'Nilotic' scenes with children playing, fishing and swimming in the blessed waters; and also in the Hodegetria at Mystras, recalling scenes of late antiquity popular in Hellenizing circles of the Capital in the Palaiologan era. The allegorical figures of the Jordan, as an old man mounted on two yoked dolphins, and the Sea, as a fair maiden riding on a whale, her cherry-red dress fluttering in the movement, belong to the same them-



atic repertoire of aristocratic Constantinopolitan art. The affirmation of life constitutes a characteristic trait of the wall-paintings in the Protaton. The Baptism is performed at the centre, with simplicity and vitality in its iconography and a rhythmical pulse uniting the figures, at the moment the heavens are mystically lighted in the revelation of the Holy Trinity and the angels at the right pay homage with broad and harmonious curves of their charming form.

Underwood 1975, 273. Mouriki 1983, 458ff., 471ff.

*103-104. Manuel Panselinos, the Anastasis and the Appearance of Christ to the Disciples, c.1290. Mount Athos, Protaton (nave, central aisle).*

Low and light-coloured, as if watery, masses undulate in front, boundary on the brink of the abyss which is formed in a semicircle below sparsely staggered mountains in the background. Christ, light of the world, stands on the fallen gates of Hades in saltire and bending with appropriate condescension, the curve of his figure strongly modelled, raises up Adam. His himation flutters triumphantly in the Descent, as he holds up the cross in his left hand and draws forth the forefather with the right. The tense face of the very aged Adam, the modest anticipation of Eve as she awaits with her arms concealed in the maphorion, the stature of the haloed John the Baptist, and the tender hope of Abel embellish the right side of the scene. Behind Christ the prophet kings and prophets stand like a pillar of the old law. The life-bearing cross with the crown of thorns, on the axis of the scene, is a hymn to the redemptive Passion in the mystical light of Christ's transparent glory, with the angels above paying homage to it. The beautiful meanings of the Resurrection are conveyed through a narrative of archaic simplicity, with iconographic and pictorial clarity, and are revealed in the mystagogy of the composition, in the symbolism of the movement and the colour. The theme presents important analogies of art and type in the Vatopedi Monastery later, with the figure of Adam in the same texture. Depicted at the right, in a rare combination with the Anastasis, is the representation of 'Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations', indicated by the excerpt from Matthew (XXVIII:19) above. From the left, the apostles venerate and look towards the Lord on a knoll. Girded by the mystic light – according to the theory of Hesychasm – of the lozenge-shaped mandorla on the head, Christ transmits by his blessing to the disciples the command to teach the gospel,

which act seals the founding of his Church on earth.

*105-106. Manuel Panselinos, the Presentation of the Virgin, c.1290. Mount Athos, Protaton (nave, south choir).*

The few representations in the Protaton from the life of the Theotokos honour her principal feasts. The Presentation of the Virgin, with the inscription 'The Holy of Holies', is depicted over the entrance to the diakonikon, opposite the Birth. With rare beauty and unprecedented typological composition of the long entourage in interconnected episodes illustrating the dedication of the Virgin in the temple of the Lord, the representation remains unique in monumental painting with its narrative plot. The movement rolls along slowly in the temple, whose impressive architectural articulation rises at the front of the scene, the procession towards the sanctuary unfolding with rhythmical, Classical serenity and grace. Joachim and Anne, left, converse as they make their way, with the little Mary ahead of them and three maids behind. Leading the way are the daughters of the Hebrews with lighted candles 'so that the child doth not turn backwards'. The last protectively holds and leads Mary; the one at the head delivers her to the chief priest who receives the child with tenderness in the Holy of Holies. The exquisite maids are among the most charming female figures created in Byzantine art. At the apex of the adyton, right, the Virgin, seated on the marble throne below the ciborium, receives the heavenly bread from the angel. The rapturous composition of the Protaton, in its ceremonial rendition with remarkable vitality and plasticity, takes on a brilliance worthy of a scene of courtly etiquette. In its symbolic resonance it projects the most august model of the soul's elevation in a church of Christ, in the spirit pervading the painting programme in the Protaton as the choicest fruit of spiritual and liturgical life on Mount Athos in the tradition of Hesychasm.

Lafontaine-Dosogne 1992<sup>2</sup>, 155ff. Kalomoirakis 1989-90, 215ff.

*107. Manuel Panselinos, St Theodore the Stratilatis, c.1290. Mount Athos, Protaton (nave, central aisle).*

Of high rank and enjoying a distinguished position in the order of military saints, and especially worshipped in Byzantium, St Theodore the Stratilatis decorates, together with his namesake Theodore the Tyro, the lower surface



of a pillar on the north side of the central aisle. He is portrayed standing and in frontal pose, turned slightly towards the Tyro yet facing the viewer. With his right hand in ample movement to the side, which the blue cloak elegantly tied with a knot in front follows, he holds the spear upright next to the shoulder, and with the left, low down, he grasps the hilt of his sword which hangs in its scabbard. Upstanding and masculine, of solid structure, with a well-built and supple body, the arched curve of the waist is emphasized in *contrapposto*. The handsome head with noble features and bright brown eyes is crowned by the brown curly hair and the well-trimmed two-pointed beard characteristic of his type. The gaze is impulsive, indefinite and introspective, mirroring the pure and tranquil soul dedicated to the faith. The masterly modelling of the face, as observed on Christ, the Virgin and the other figures by Panselinos, executed with the care of a portable icon and with vivid colours in the conciliatory chiaroscuro, enhances the painterly, pure relief of the heroic figure of Theodore.

108. Manuel Panselinos, *St Theodore the Tyro*, c.1290.  
Mount Athos, *Protaion* (nave, central aisle).

St Theodore the Tyro is portrayed, as usual, in a pair with Theodore the Stratilatis, inferior in the military hierarchy but equal in worship. He wears the same uniform, differentiated in colours and formal details, but similarly discreetly embellished with pearls and precious stones on narrow bands at the edges of the cuirass and on the broad, gold appliqué on the middle of the cloak. His face is turned slightly towards the adjacent figure but the gaze is in the other direction. In the right hand he holds his spear diagonally across the chest and in the left the hilt of his sword below. With forked beard, short light brown hair leaving free the fleshy ears, and soft modelling on the face without the pronounced use of red which highlights the harsher visage of Theodore the Stratilatis, his ethos is that of a brave and decent soldier.

109. Michael Astrapas and Eutychios, *the Dormition of the Virgin*, 1294/95.  
Ohrid, *St Clement* (*Peribleptos*) (nave, west wall).

St Clement at Ohrid, formerly the Panayia Peribleptos, is a domed, tetrastyle cross-in-square church with narthex. Completely covered with wonderful wall-paintings, it has the rare distinction of preserving full evidence on the date

and the donors and creators of the decoration. The painted foundation inscription of 1294/95, above the main entrance, mentions the donors, the great hetairiarch and brother-in-law of the king, Progonos Sgouros, and his wife Eudokia. Furthermore, in many representations in the nave and narthex the famous painters Michael Astrapas and Eutychios of Thessaloniki have written their names or initials.

The epic Dormition of the Virgin, an enormous wall-painting on the west side, is the culmination of the cycle of five scenes narrating the Virgin's assumption to heaven. At the left, the angel of the Lord announces the demise of the Theotokos, who bids her women friends farewell; at the right, the exodus takes place, and the apostles find the tomb empty after the Metastasis. Unprecedented in its iconographic conception, the Dormition, torrential in rhetoric and dramatic in its hyperbole, glorifies the Mother of God, denotes the triumph of the Incarnation and rejoices in the miracle of the communion of the above with the below that inspires the theme of her end on earth in the *Peribleptos*. The gateway to heaven is wide open, and the angels descend in never-ending orderly lines, keeping close to Christ, some with burning candles honouring 'the mother of the eternal light'. Their way is bordered by the high, cuboid masses of magnificent buildings, with grieving women standing in the windows. Everything converges towards the sleeping Virgin to the fore. Christ, resplendent in golden pink himatia, bends over his mother, clutching her soul, here winged in a revival of Hellenizing memories. The sorrowful apostles encircle the bed. The angel in the cortège, right, raises the sword which punished the profanity of Jephonias. The multi-figural composition moving on the axes is crowned by the arc of heaven. In the background, the apostles hovering in the clouds come for the funeral. In functional unity of time, above right, the Virgin on the cloud is borne heavenwards in the company of angels and offers her girdle to the belated Thomas.

Miljković-Peppek 1967, 254.

110. Michael Astrapas and Eutychios, *the Prayer in Gethsemane*, 1294/95.  
Ohrid, *St Clement* (nave, south cross arm).

An impressive, narrative composition with a prominent place in the cycle of the Passion occupies the south wall of the south arm of the cross. The successive episodes bear



the titles 'The Prayer', 'The Indolence' and 'The Second Prayer', and with passages from Matthew's gospel (XXVI:39 and 40) Christ's first prayer and speech to his disciples are noted. The bright, clear mass of the Mount of Olives, with pretty clusters of trees and bushes, and broad curves, is the troubled setting for the drama. At the left, Christ stands and prays, as if his agony is concentrated in the himation cast on the rock. At the top right, in the second hour, he has fallen on his knees and calmly accepts the will of God. A pair of miniature angels in heaven stands beside him, expressive in both scenes. In front spreads the Indolence. The weary disciples lie asleep and the Lord comes over to the right to address Peter, who awakes, startled; likewise the young John opposite and another disciple a little way off, who outstretches his hand and draws his neighbour to the centre. The lively and varied poses of the apostles, some frequently featured in the iconography of the theme, render with a naturalness but also an affectedness of plethoric dramatic tone, echoed in the modelled folds of the garments, the agitation and fear imprinted by sleep. Outstanding in his bold and unusual pose, Peter sits up suddenly with his back to the viewer. Low down in the central complex, just the same as in the Protaton but more linear in its composition, the deep sleep of the young disciple, whose recumbent figure delimits the group, is here stressed by the loosened sandal.

*111. Michael Astrapas and Eutychios, Jacob's Ladder and His Struggle with the Angel, 1294/95.*  
*Ohrid, St Clement (narthex, west wall).*

The painting programme in St Clement evaluates with mature theological thought the liturgical importance of the areas of the church in the choice and distribution of iconographic cycles. These unfold with narrative fluency and lucidity, with the dramatic excess and troubled movement of an anticlassical style, intensified by the heavy, stereometric and spectacularly voluminous figures. The decoration in the narthex, introductory to that of the nave where the gospel and the Mariological cycle are developed, includes themes inspired by Old Testament types of the Virgin and ecclesiastical hymns. In an intact, perspicacious whole they foretell and honour the role of the Virgin in the work of the wisdom of God for the salvation of the world, which Christ the Angel of the Great Will, in the climactic prophetic vision of the central vault, signifies. Jacob's Ladder and his Struggle with the Angel are depicted in a

single representation, as usual, on the south tympanum of the west wall. This is one of the most commonly occurring biblical prefigurations of the Virgin, which were established in monumental painting in the second half of the thirteenth century, when her cult became more widespread. In an open, mountainous landscape, Jacob, left, on the ground with his head resting on the stone, dreams of the ladder linking earth to heaven, which four angels ascend and descend (Genesis XXVIII:10-17). Further right, the unsuspected Jacob wrestles all night long with the angel, opposite the mountain (Genesis XXXII:24-30). Broad, robust figures with an emphasized corporeality and impulsive movement, the heavy sabre-shaped wings of the angels, the perspective of the landscape and the vivid light in the shades of colour which mould the volumes, make up the strong symbolic and narrative expression of the icon.

Der Nersessian 1975, 314, 334ff.

*112. Michael Astrapas and Eutychios, the Archangel Gabriel, 1294/95.*  
*Ohrid, St Clement (narthex, north wall).*

The Archangel Gabriel is portrayed full-length in the narthex, to the right of the north entrance, as guardian of the church, in regal raiment and purple shoes. With a gentle turn and inclination of the head he welcomes those crossing the threshold, forewarning with the open scroll and the stylus held in his hands in front that 'he writes down all who enter the church, and protects the pious and destroys the impious speedily'. In a rare iconographic type, identical with that in the Protaton, radiant and enchanting of aspect, he has the same grave ethos as all the figures in the church. With shimmering gilded wings quivering at the tip and a white fillet elegantly wound in the hair and fluttering at the ends, he has a robust stature, a clear, full square-shaped face and strong neck, and emanates vigour and health. A certain melancholy is discerned in the tender features of his serious countenance; the simplicity and grace of the heavenly figure are manifest in the fine, restrained pose.

*113-114. Saints Prokopios and Nestor, late 13th cent.*  
*Ellasson, Monastery of the Panayia Olympiotissa, katholikon (nave, SW pillar).*

The lovely katholikon of the Olympiotissa is a domed, aisleless, Greek-cross church with low, vaulted ambulat-



ory. The wall-paintings in the church are dated on the basis of the evidence of the wonderful wood-carved portal to 1294-1305. Moreover, the traits of iconography and style place the painting at the end of the thirteenth century, around 1295, when the so-called heavy and bulky style prevailed. Launched from Constantinople and finding fertile ground in Thessaloniki, its choicest fruits are the excellent works in the Protaton on Mount Athos and in St Clement at Ohrid. An important creation of this style, which also had an effect on the art of southern mainland and island Greece, is the decoration of the Olympiotissa, which moves in a minor key of painterly expression, simpler and calmer in comparison with the excellent works of Athos and Ohrid.

The military saints George and Demetrios, Theodore the Stratilatis and Theodore the Tyro, Prokopios, Nestor and Merkourios, established by a long tradition of cult as the most popular in their category, adorn surfaces of the two west pillars in appropriate hierarchical order. The military saints are assembled on the west pillars in exactly the same way in the contemporary church of St Clement at Ohrid. Saints Prokopios, Nestor and Merkourios, on the south-west pillar, face the south side of the ambulatory. They are portrayed full-length in a single panel, with lively poses in parallels and reverses which determine the dialectical relationship between them, yet at the same time calm in their transcendental abstraction. Common or similar elements in the stance, gestures and uniform, particularly the repetition of the position of the left hand, holding the scabbard or the spear low down, discreetly unite their figures, with a sense of rhythm. Prokopios and Nestor, in closer association and slightly confronting one another, constitute a couple. The adolescent figure of St Prokopios, of rare physical beauty, is perhaps the most alluring by the anonymous painter of the Olympiotissa. Plain and modest in pose and lightly armed – a sword held high on the shoulder and a shield hanging from a pearl-studded strap on the other side – the young saint with the comely, radiant and noble face has a tender, introverted expression and a barely perceptible melancholy in his gaze, which is transfixed towards Nestor.

Constantinides 1992, 246ff.

#### 115. *St Azarias, late 13th cent.*

*Elasson, Monastery of the Panayia Olympiotissa, katholikon (nave, north wall).*

In the rich cycle of saints in the church, the three youths of the Old Testament, Ananias, Mishael and Azarias, in bust and frontal, adorn the narrow surfaces above the columns, in attitudes of supplication, with their hands in front, palm outwards, dressed in sumptuous attire and wearing the Jewish cidaris on their heads. The refined figure of Azarias, with soft bright modelling and pretty features, is warmed with red spots of youthful bashfulness on the broad cheeks. The round, full face, the strong neck and the sturdy body, decorously described beneath the soft folds of the tunic and cloak, in two different shades of light blue, convey, without excess, the corporeal presence the bulky style seeks to impose, but in its frequently milder vein found in the Olympiotissa.

Constantinides 1992, 197ff.

#### 116. *St Peter the Athonite, late 13th cent.*

*Elasson, Monastery of the Panayia Olympiotissa, katholikon (nave, NW pillar).*

The anchorite saint depicted full-length and frontal on the west face of the north-west pillar, corresponding to St Onouphrios on the south-west one, is identified with Peter the Athonite. The hermits with a common feast day occupy a prominent position opposite the entrance to the church, close to the leading apostles Peter and Paul; Peter the Athonite, described as the 'new Peter' in the canon dedicated to him by Joseph the Hymnographer, is next to the homonymous apostle. His representation, which is rare, occurs in the Protaton. Tall and thin, with his hands in front in supplication and apologia, he makes a strong impression on the believer, with the long hair clothing his body in the favourite aquamarine colour of the Olympiotissa painter, with plasticity in the gradation of tones, and above all with the soft russet beard which flows like a dense cascade down the middle, right to the feet. In its tight symmetry the figure sends forth the flame of ascesis which inspires the monastic ideal; that which vitalizes the grave, frowning gaze with internal tension and severity. The painting programme in the katholikon of the Olympiotissa, in which the Akathistos Hymn has a conspicuous place, succinct in the ideas it develops with contemporary discourse, determines at various points the influence of the leading spiritual ambience of Mount Athos,



in the climate which distinguishes the ardent expressions of religious art of the age. The founding and decorating of the monastery, an ambitious project, is linked with the patronage of the Sebastokrators Constantine and Theodoros Doukas of Thessaly (1289-1303), who were probably portrayed on the north side of the ambulatory.

Constantinides 1992, 238ff., 287ff.

*117. The Prophet Elisha, late 13th cent.*

*Elasson, Monastery of the Panayia Olympiotissa, katholikon (nave, drum of the dome).*

The elevated dome dominates the building. Its painted composition, original in many respects, inspired by the Hesychast theory and the theological climate of the period, sends forth a hymn to the glory of God and the Word Incarnate. In two successive rows of seven angels, the first fly and lift up the disc of the Pantokrator and the others, lower down, form a procession associated with the liturgy. Tall, alluring, in royal robes and holding lighted candles, they advance with open stride and in adoration towards the Throne of the Hetoimasia, where the concept of sacrifice is extolled with Christ's chiton, the symbols of the Passion and the gospel proclaiming his invisible presence. Eight prophets in the drum lay the foundation, through the texts in their open scrolls, for the majesty of Christ Pantokrator. Another ten, distributed in the tympana of the side walls, link the system of the dome with the gospel representations which come after, narrating the work of the Divine Economy. Elisha, in the drum of the dome, is depicted in a relationship of dialogue with Elijah. Through the text on his scroll, he asks, before his ascension, 'I pray you, let me inherit a double share of your spirit' (Kings II, II:9). An imposing figure, characteristic of the decoration with his bulky body emphasized by the vivacious folds and illumined planes modelling the garments, his ethos is grave and his facial expression affable, as he addresses Elijah with vehemence.

Constantinides 1992, 91ff.

*118. The Embracing of Joachim and Anne, late 13th cent.*

*Elasson, Monastery of the Panayia Olympiotissa, katholikon (sanctuary, prothesis).*

The compositions in the registers of decoration include the gospel feasts in the nave; those in the ambulatory, are dedicated to the Virgin, to whom the monastery is consec-

rated, with scenes from the Mariological cycle and the Akathistos Hymn, of which this is the earliest extant illustration. Of the representations of the life of the Virgin that decorated the prothesis, the Embracing of Joachim and Anne, and the Birth of the Virgin have survived. The scene of the Embracing is sparse and takes place in front of a high, neutral, light-coloured wall, with a tower-like structure in the middle, where the parents of the Virgin are shown meeting, after the joyous and unexpected announcement that Anne is with child, and Joachim's return home. Of special interest is the iconographic rendering of the group of two figures in the felicitous embrace which signifies the conception of the Virgin. The sprightly, open step, the gestures and the pose of both Joachim and Anne, and the finial formed on Joachim's himation behind, are explicit traits which differentiate the representation in the Olympiotissa from the same scene in St Clement at Ohrid and subsequent ones in the area of Macedonia, and hark back to a Classical Constantinopolitan model, that of the miniature in the Menologion of Basil II, of the late tenth century. Tall, slender and supple figures, Joachim serious and formal, Anne modest and restrained in her obvious delight, they compose a modelled group of warm and serene disposition, spreading outwards in lovely, scintillating highlights to the garments.

Constantinides 1992, 177ff.

*119. The Presentation of the Virgin, 1313-1314.*

*Studenica Monastery, church of Saints Joachim and Anne (north wall).*

In the small, aisleless, domed Greek-cross church of King Milutin – dedicated to Saints Joachim and Anne – in the Studenica Monastery, the Mariological cycle, which honours the Virgin and her parents with narrations from her girlhood, constitutes an extensive and very charming part of the decoration. It runs in a frieze round the surfaces of the lovely, square chamber, above the saints, exactly as in St Clement at Ohrid, and has an analogous thematic repertoire. In the central position on the south and the north side are the Birth and the Presentation of the Virgin, their dimensions enhancing their liturgical and doctrinal significance. The iconography of the Presentation follows the then rare type adopted in St Clement by Michael Astrapas and Eutychios, possibly from the model of the Protaton, which was more widely diffused in the fourteenth century in the ambit of influence of the painting of Thessaloniki. Joachim and Anne walk along at the edge of



the scene in animated conversation. The infant Mary's entry to and dedication in the temple is celebrated with the formality of a sacred procession, with harmonious colour and grace of temporal expression. The refined composition, of Classicizing inspiration, is embellished with the sweet group of virgins with lighted candles in the middle, at a distance of respect from the little Mary whom Zacharias emotionally receives in the open doorway of the sanctuary. On the third step up of the adyton, the Virgin receives the heavenly bread from an angel, in the miniature scene which summarizes her miraculous nourishing and up-bringing in the temple of the Lord.

Babić 1987, 251ff.

120. *The Dormition of the Virgin, 1313-1314.*

*Studenica Monastery, church of Saints Joachim and Anne (west wall).*

The earliest known rendering of the Dormition as the funeral of the Virgin is in the little church of the king at Studenica. Inspired by hymnological and patristic texts referring primarily to the burial, which associate the funeral of the 'living ark of God' with the carrying of the Covenant, the origin of the scene should be sought in St Clement at Ohrid, where the Virgin's funeral constitutes a separate theme in the cycle of the Dormition. In the representation at Studenica, Peter heads the procession, right, censuring, followed by hierarchs reading the funeral service and sorrowful apostles bearing and accompanying the bier. There is a host of effulgent angels, left, and at the edge a dense group of the Virgin's weeping friends. At the other edge, right, a group of apostles led by Paul and women from the other side, still in poses of lamentation, stoop and stare in amazement at the empty tomb, verifying the Metastasis. The disciples' lovely, pale himatia are richly draped in deep folds and in their movement the lusty light shimmers, exulting the unexpected miracle, which circles the bodies with broad, strong curves and enthuses the gaze. The last scene, and iconographic elements such as the Virgin's winged soul which Christ held in the now-lost middle part of the wall-painting, allude directly to St Clement at Ohrid. The monumental and rhythmical composition at Studenica, whose wonderful decoration is also attributed to Michael Astrapas and Eutychios, recurs with variations in the dense, multi-figural Dormition in Ayios Georgios at Staro Nagoričino, signed by the same painters, as well as in the church at Gračanica.

121. *Georgios Kalliergis, the Anastasis, 1315.*

*Veroia, church of Christ (south wall).*

The small, aisleless, pitched-roofed church of the Anastasis, since 1314 the katholikon of the Monastery of Christ the Saviour, preserves one of the prime ensembles of wall-paintings of the age. Its painted foundation inscription, rich in information, notes that the decoration was finished in 1315 by Euphrosyni, wife of the founder Xenos Psalidas. The work was executed by the 'historiographer' Kalliergis 'ὅλης Θεσσαλίας ἄριστος ζωγράφος' (most excellent painter in the whole of Thessaly), as he himself proudly declares. He is identified with the painter Georgios Kalliergis, resident of Thessaloniki and known from a document of 1322.

'The Holy Anastasis of Christ', to which the church founded by Xenos Psalidas and completed by his pious spouse Euphrosyni was originally dedicated, is accorded the position of the honoured icon of the church in an arched apse on the south side, adjacent to the sanctuary. With the Crucifixion on the opposite arch of the north wall, also detached from the gospel cycle illustrated higher up, they project the idea of redemption, which was also desired by the donors for their God-pleasing deed. Christ's Descent into Hell is rendered with the symmetry and economy of a portable icon, in the new iconographic type that prevailed in the fourteenth century. Christ, gold-clad in the victorious light of the Anastasis, towers up with dignity of movement, *en face*, in the middle of the cave of Hades, stepping on the broken bronze gates and drawing forth the aged forefathers from the sarcophagi: Adam with his right hand, Eve with his left. He is flanked by the standing figures of David and Solomon with John the Baptist, left, and Abel and two hoary prophets, right, the first of whom is Samuel, holding the horn of oil. His very rare representation is also observed in the Anastasis in Ayios Nikolaos Orphanos at Thessaloniki, which in its iconographic rendering is closely linked with the Veroia wall-painting. Visible between the two convergent, stepped mountains in the background is the apex of the mandorla in which the effulgent figure of Christ is projected. In the mystery of the dimly gleaming dawn, the massifs, with their form and spectrum of colour, suggest the impression of a mystical environment, which Christ lights up with the gold of the sun. He 'the resurrection and the life'.

Pelekanidis 1973, 1ff., 66ff., 118.



122. *Georgios Kalliergis, the Prophet Malachi, 1315.*  
*Veroia, church of Christ (south wall).*

The decoration of the church is developed in thematic units, in zones, with symmetry and clarity in its structure; with nobility of painterly style, rich in chromatic harmonies, with iconographic temperance and rhetorical dignity, which register with delicate psychological inquiries the high spiritual content of figures and events. In the narrow middle zone circular medallions of saints from different orders run round the walls, all on a deep red ground which enlivens the faces. The prophet Malachi on the south side, between the prophets who with their pose and the passages in the scrolls refer to Christological representations above them, is depicted below the Raising of Lazarus, prophesying the Lord's Entry into Jerusalem (Malachi III:1-2). Plasticity of movement, firm, fast drawing and attractive colour, bluish highlights of age applied to the hair and beard, all enhance the personality of the prophet with vigour of form and an expression of mental mettle.

Pelekanidis 1973, 73ff., 80.

123-124. *The Birth of St John the Baptist, 1310-1320.*  
*Thessaloniki, Ayioi Apostoloi, chapel of St John the Baptist (south wall).*

A foundation of Patriarch Niphon I (1310-1314), the church of the Ayioi Apostoloi, formerly of the Panayia, katholikon of a monastery, is one of the loveliest monuments in Thessaloniki, and the most important there of the fourteenth century. The elegant Palaiologan building, in the type of a composite tetrastyle, domed, cross-in-square church, with narthex-lite and ambulatory with cupolas at the corners, is decorated with mosaics and wall-paintings of superb Constantinopolitan art in the nave, and wall-paintings in the remaining areas. The east section of the north side of the ambulatory is arranged as a chapel dedicated to St John the Baptist.

The Birth of the Baptist (Luke I:57-65) adorns the tympanum of the south wall and takes place in three episodes, against a single, tripartite architectural backdrop. At the centre, Elisabeth, much fatigued, lying on the bed and tended by the nursemaids, turns leftwards. There, the unobtrusive girl respectfully presents to the father the newborn babe in swaddling bands. Zacharias, left, writes the name John on a tablet. On the other side of the scene, the capable, buxom midwife with the infant on her knees, protected in her garment, prepares the bath, assisted by a

young maidservant. Dedicated to the task, with the coarse features of a peasant woman, strong, bare arms and grey hair held back in a striped kerchief, her face can be seen in profile, as she tests the temperature of the water in the basin. The baby John curls up, half-afraid in her arms, with a distant gaze.

Stephan 1986, 219ff.

125-126. *Herod's Banquet, 1310-1320.*

*Thessaloniki, Ayioi Apostoloi, chapel of St John the Baptist (north wall).*

The chapel of St John the Baptist is decorated with the cycle of his life. Scenes from his boyhood and the martyrdom are depicted on the side walls and the cupola, and his figure in bust in the semi-dome of the apse. Herod's Banquet is represented on the tympanum of the north wall, in two episodes, separated by the window, with the banquet left and Salome's dance right, against a continuous wall in the background. In front of a domed porch of the palace, sitting at the official table, left, are the host on the throne and his fellow feasters, pensive and agitated, on the face behind. Standing between, in front of the column, is the indifferent servant in expectant stance. Herod's gaze is fixed on the maiden opposite. A willowy figure, with the veils of the dance, balancing on her head a basin with the severed head of the Baptist, Salome, dancing gracefully, is spectacularly in the air. The mural decoration of the katholikon was commissioned by the abbot Paul 'μαθητής τοῦ ἁγιωτάτου οἰκουμενικοῦ πατριάρχου καὶ κτίτορος κυροῦ Νίφωνος καὶ δεύτερος κτίτωρ' (disciple of the most holy ecumenical patriarch and founder Sire Niphon and second founder), as is written in the dedicatory scene in the narthex, above the Royal Door. The dating presents a problem with regard to the deposing of Niphon in 1314 – various dates after 1310 to the middle of the century have been proposed – which could well be solved with the publication of the decoration as a whole, after the cleaning of the wall-paintings. There is general consensus that this wonderful work must have been created by painters from Constantinople.

Stephan 1986, 11ff., 224ff.

127. *The Anastasis, 1315-1320.*

*Constantinople, Chora Monastery, chapel (sanctuary, semi-dome).*

The funerary chapel of the Chora Monastery, alongside the katholikon with its wonderful mosaics, which have sur-



vived mainly in the narthexes, is decorated with wall-paintings of the same superb art. Annexed to the south side of the church, the rectangular chapel is articulated harmoniously in three parts, distinguished by transverse arches which define corresponding areas of the painted decoration. The west and the central part are equally roofed by a dome and a vault, respectively, the apse in the east of the sanctuary dominates its entire width.

Weird, converging mountains and below, the abyss of hell. In the middle, Christ, dressed in white, the inaccessible light of the Anastasis, his heavenly mandorla behind glowing in the golden dawn of the stars, with divine impetus draws forth from the tombs Adam and Eve. Before him lie the shattered bronze gates, the iron bolts scattered, the locks broken and Hades bound in his chains. At the sides, in two groups, are kings, the righteous and prophets. Distinguishable at the left is St John the Baptist pointing to Christ; at the right, Abel, in a lovely garment, leads the way, standing upright in Eve's sarcophagus, holding high the shepherd's crook as a symbol. Christ's Descent into Hell, its symmetrical iconographic type known from the preceding century and prevailing later, is triumphantly inscribed in the semi-dome of the apse. Its unusual, rather daring position befits the funerary chapel and its significance is pertinent for the ideas dealt with in the entire decoration. At the left and right, in the arch of the sanctuary, in association with the raising of Adam and Eve, the introductory miracles of the Raising of the Widow's Son and of Jairus's Daughter, are included in a composition of wider meaning, culminating in the representation of the Anastasis, which elevates the message of salvation, the hope of believers in Christ's everlasting mercy.

Underwood 1966, 192ff. Der Nersessian 1975, 75, 308ff., 320ff.

*128-129. The Last Judgement, 1315-1320.*

*Constantinople, Chora Monastery, chapel (vault of the central bay).*

In the vault of the central bay of the chapel, the Last Judgement floats airily in the space, in a magnificent composition which moves the heavenly vault, as the angel 'who revolves the sky', at the centre, defines the circular course of the bands of adorant saints in the clouds towards the Just Judge. Christ, towards the East, in the majesty of his glory, receiving mediations of the Virgin and St John the Baptist, with his angelic hosts behind and the enthroned apostles at the sides, summons the blessed of the father to his right and dispatches the damned to the

left 'to the eternal fire'. Adam and Eve pay homage before the throne of the Hetoimasia. Lower down is the Weighing of Souls. At the corners, as if in pendentives of a dome, are, at the west, the raising of the dead on land and at sea, and a guardian angel leading a soul to judgement – probably that of Theodoros Metochites, as he requested in his written invocation to Archangel Michael. Represented on the other side are Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham with the righteous, and opposite, in the river of fire, the damned and the rich man who anxiously calls Abraham. Depictions of the felicity of Paradise and the torments of Hell extend on the fronts of adjacent walls. The composition in the Chora Monastery is unprecedented and unrivalled in its inspired development on a broad vaulted surface, as well as in its unusual position before the sanctuary, wherein the triumphant Anastasis and, higher up, Archangel Michael with sceptre and globe with the initials Χ(ριστός) Δ(ίκαιος) Κ(ρίτης) (Christ the Just Judge) mark the salvatory road to the Last Judgement.

Underwood 1966, 199ff. Der Nersessian 1975, 75, 325ff.

*130, 132. St Prokopios, 1315-1320.*

*Constantinople, Chora Monastery, chapel (south wall).*

In the register of saints below, where military saints predominate, as is frequently the case in churches of the period, St Prokopios is depicted with St Sabbas the Stratilatis, full-length, at the west edge of the south wall, the former in military uniform and armed, in a lively pose towards the sanctuary, the latter frontal in the garb of a martyr with the cross in his hand in front. Represented on the south wall are military saints especially revered and pre-eminent in the hierarchy, included in the ranks of which is Prokopios. The young saint, with the energetic aspect of a noble prince, raises a dagger in his right hand as he turns, and in his left holds upright the sword in its scabbard, resting on the shoulder, the hilt visible behind his head, in reference to his martyrdom. The legs are apart and follow the direction of the arms. The heavy, round shield with mask emblem, upright on the ground beside him, balances the movement of the figure, as does the cloak, which is richly draped on the chest and ornately swathes the left arm from the shoulder, falling in a sharp-pointed finial in front on the shield.

Underwood 1966, 256. Der Nersessian 1975, 319ff.



131. *The Virgin of Tenderness, 1315-1320.*

*Constantinople, Chora Monastery, chapel (south wall).*

Depicted in front of the sanctuary apse, on the south side, is the Virgin of Tenderness, standing on a gem-studded footstool. In the corresponding position on the north wall, where the painting is now destroyed, Christ the Lord will have been illustrated. The Virgin, tall and slim, enveloped in richly draped garments with broad overfolded finials, inclines affectionately as she holds the Christ Child in her hands. He, lively, clutching the Virgin's maphorion with his right hand and holding the scroll in his left, clings closely to his mother, turning his head slightly backwards as he looks at her, their cheeks merging in a tender caress. The Virgin's serious and distant gaze is imbued with imperceptible sadness as she turns towards the sanctuary. The dual meaning of the superb maternal group, in which the charming image is opposed to the prescience of the future Passion, is appropriate to the placement of the Virgin of Tenderness next to the sanctuary, wherein the Lamb is sacrificed for the salvation of the world, and to the ideas embodied in the decoration of the funerary chapel as a whole. The way in which the Virgin holds the child, with her arms outstretched towards the apse in offering, is consonant with the symbolisms of the Passion. Consistent with its semantics are the manner in which the child's legs cross, one bare to the knee the other with sole facing outwards, as well as the rare 'earring of the law', a heavy loop passed through Christ's ear lobe, also observed in the twelfth-century wall-paintings of the Virgin of the Passion and of Symeon, opposite, in the church of the Panayia Arakou in Cyprus.

Underwood 1966, 248ff. Der Nersessian 1975, 75, 319.

133. *The Virgin with Archangels, 1315-1320.*

*Constantinople, Chora Monastery, chapel (dome).*

The painting programme in the west bay is dedicated to the Virgin. In the decorative zone of the light-filled dome, the Virgin with Christ is extolled in the medallion of the eye, with twelve satellite angels and archangels low down between its ribs and hymnographer saints on the pendentives. The angels of the Lord, resplendent figures of courtly grandeur and heavenly grace, enhance the composition praising the Incarnation. Of princely stature, their long wings at rest, clad in gold-embellished robes in rich, pastel colours, they hold a sceptre and globe: the central one towards the sanctuary raises a banner with the opening

words of the *epinikios* (triumphal hymn), the others clasp the cloak in front. They move in formal poses between the bands of fantastic, colourful flowers of a paradisial meadow which articulate the dome.

Underwood 1966, 213ff. Der Nersessian 1975, 310.

134. *Christ and the Samaritan Woman and the Wedding at Cana, 1312-1322.*

*Mystras, Hodegetria (narthex, north vault).*

The church of the Hodegetria, also known as the Afentiko, built in 1310 as the katholikon of the Monastery of the Panayia Vrontochiou by its educated abbot and Great Protosyngelos of the Peloponnese, Pachomios, is the most magnificent at Mystras. An imposing building, it presents a rare architectural synthesis of a three-aisle basilica on the ground floor and a cross-in-square church with dome and four cupolas on the first; with domed narthex, chapels, an ambulatory open on three sides, at one time, and a belfry. The building as a whole has an aura of the power and wealth Pachomios sought and gained for his monastery from the Emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos. The ambitious decoration, worthy of the Capital in its luxury, combined in an unusual manner the wall-paintings of splendid art with the, now lost, costly marble revetment of the walls below. In the narthex, which is decorated with a cycle from Christ's public life and miracles, his Encounter with the Samaritan Woman and the Wedding at Cana are illustrated in a single panel on the west side of the north vault. The lower section of the representations is preserved. At the left, Christ, followed by Peter and possibly James, converses with the Samaritan woman as she draws water from Jacob's well; he offers her the 'water of life'. Higher up, left, in front of a building, Jews, depicted in miniature with kerchiefs at the neck, watch the event. Represented on the right is the miracle of the wine from the Wedding at Cana. Christ, with the Virgin at his side and Peter behind him, blesses the water in the stone pots. The chief steward of the banquet, his hands covered, stands respectfully opposite the Lord; behind is a servant holding the water flask hanging from the shoulder. The narration is calm, the movement tardy, rolling serenely and rhythmically from the sides to the centre, gathering the figures in expressive, discreetly articulated, conversational clusters and pushing aside to the left edge the rooted mountain formed with evanescent light of the atmosphere. The coloration is noble, rich and harmoniously woven, the figures tall, full



and of princely stature, the pretty woman in the middle wears an elegant red peplos and the light casts a satiny sheen on the garments. The symbolism of the scenes is projected in an aristocratic manner of superb artistry: the apocalyptic symbolism of the well 'of water springing up into everlasting life', and the eucharistic symbolism of the Wedding at Cana, where Christ 'made the beginning of signs'.

Chatzidakis 1992, 47ff., 53ff.

*135. The Healing of the Blind Man and the Healing of Peter's Mother-in-law, 1312-1322.*

*Mystras, Hodegetria (narthex, north vault).*

In the panel on the east side of the north vault of the narthex, Christ coming from on high, the 'light of the world', with Peter and the young John close to him, heals the man born blind. In the pool of Siloam below, the man, fallen on his knees, washes his face and gains his sight. In Peter's house, right, Christ, with two disciples behind and the worried Peter at his mother-in-law's side, compassionately holds the hand of the sick woman sitting on the bed, and her fever leaves her. Two women, witnesses to the miracle, depicted in miniature, lively and curious, watch from the windows of the building behind, which embraces the dense crowd. In a correlation of the two miracles, soft diagonal axes define the position of Christ with his accompanying disciples, and of the blind man, respectively, in the two episodes of the first representation. At the left, life is movement, and decay means the blind man, drawn with loose lines, who stands helpless, stick in hand. Below, the unseeing eyes open and his figure is swathed in vitalizing curves. The light illumines the small flat surfaces of rocks on the mountain that rises to its slender summit behind the blind man, whitens the outlines and the balustrades of the building, shines in the faces and ennobles the colours on the garments. Elegant movements and aristocratic poses, the quatrefoil pool with the charming fountain, the complex edifice with the festive red cloth hung out on the flat roofs and in the doorways, are consistent with the delicate and aristocratic style of the painter of the miracles in the narthex.

*136. The Angel of the mandorla, 1312-1322.*

*Mystras, Hodegetria (SW chapel).*

In the two chapels on the west side, which communicate with the narthex, the funerary chapel of Pachomios and

the south one with the chrysobulls, the vigorous personality of the founder, abbot of the Vrontochion Monastery, is extolled and his pious work eternalized. In the half-light of the doorway, like a secret sacristy, the transcribed chrysobulls recording the property and privileges granted to the monastery by the emperor cover the walls of the south-west chapel in a decorous painted composition that ensures from the legal aspect, as well, their inviolability from the local or other authority for eternity, consonant with current ideas of the age. As in the Ascension, four angels flying in the vault lightly hold the mandorla of Christ, whose figure has been lost. Between them, four broad rays of light issue forth from the mandorla, revealing the divine hands at the edge, each of which holds a chrysobull at the top. Their dates (1312-1322) are also a terminus for the creation of the wall-paintings in the Hodegetria. Alongside the angels and 'in the shelter of their wings', an inscription with six lines of iambic trimeters formally expresses the meanings interwoven in the painting: 'With godly hands the heart of the king has given these chrysobulls to the monastery and Christ is seen commanding from on high the glorious mansion of her who gave him birth', and acknowledges the long-lasting and arbitrary pains Pachomios suffered. The comely angels circling the heavenly mandorla in the blue space fly with vigorous, modelled movement in rhythmical order, with the edge of the himation folded back and open wings, hymning with grace the divine harmony of the universe.

Chatzidakis 1992, 66ff.

*137. A Host of Martyrs, 1312-1322.*

*Mystras, Hodegetria (NW chapel).*

Pachomios, abbot of the Vrontochion Monastery, was buried in the north-west chapel of the Hodegetria, as was the despot of Mystras Theodore I Palaiologos, in 1407, as the monk Theodoritos. The painting in the sepulchral area prepared by Pachomios constitutes an iconographic unity of eschatological ideas, inspired by the requiem mass and expressing the abbot's expectation that his work in the monastery will be vindicated with the reward of his soul's repose with those of the righteous. His hopes are manifest in the choice of the dedicatory scene for the arcosolium of his tomb, west, showing Pachomios offering the Virgin a model of the magnificent church he built for her, and the joyous reception of a host of angels with lighted candles around the arch above. In the upper zones of the decora-



tion, groups of apostles, prophets, patriarchs, martyrs, hermits and all the saints accompany the Virgin and St John the Baptist in their supplications for Pachomios's soul to the enthroned Christ on the east side and the Pantokrator in the heavenly vault. The *theotokion* of the requiem mass, which encapsulates the meaning of the decoration, was written on the Deesis (Trimorph) of the east side. The superb host of martyrs, one of the best to have survived, its painting associated with that of the miracles in the narthex, adorns the zone above Pachomios's tomb. Idealized figures of serious and noble aspect, their pose imposing and graceful, as though depicting in their ideal band the nobles and princes of that era, rise up against the dark blue ground, lambent in their colourful, gem-studded courtly raiment.

Chatzidakis 1992, 64ff.

138. *St Gregory of Great Armenia, 1312-1322.*

*Mystras, Hodegetria (sanctuary apse).*

The large apse in the sanctuary of the church is adorned with two successive rows of concelebrating hierarchs, below the Virgin Platytera and the eucharistic Communion of the Apostles, surrounded and distinguished by arches originally revetted with marble. The officiant and wise Fathers of the Church are depicted in groups, in rhythmically repetitive pose and at a distance from each other, holding scrolls with excerpts from the liturgy, all the same in front, like a slow, formal procession towards the altar, the place of sacrifice. In the upper right row, St Gregory of Great Armenia, very tall, fundamental and venerable, addresses a 'prolix supplication' to God.

Chatzidakis 1992, 47ff., 53ff.

139. *The Communion of the Apostles, 1310-1320.*

*Thessaloniki, Ayios Nikolaos Orphanos (sanctuary, east wall).*

Formerly the katholikon of a small monastery, the timber-roofed church of Ayios Nikolaos Orphanos, in the upper city of Thessaloniki, has the simple architectural form of a nave with a lower ambulatory of the same width, forming aisles, and a narthex. The decoration is preserved over a wide area and constitutes one of the most important and richest assemblages of early fourteenth-century wall-paintings in Thessaloniki.

The Communion of the Apostles is depicted on the face of the east side, shared in two panels in which all the apostles

are represented, with the Giving of the Bread (Metadosis) and the Giving of the Wine (Metalepsis) to the left and right of the apse respectively; the scene occupies a somewhat unusual position determined by the well-calculated organization of an iconographic programme taking into consideration economy of space. In the two eucharistic representations Christ, below an elegant marble ciborium, behind the altar and accompanied by an angel deacon holding the liturgic fans, wears the prelate's *polystavrios* sakkos as Great High Priest, as in the contemporary wall-paintings of Michael Astrapas and Eutychios in Ayios Nikitas at Čučer, and in earlier examples of the type. According to a recent interpretation, the phenomenon echoes the increased authority of the patriarch vis-à-vis the emperor at that time. In the Metalepsis the angel is half-hidden behind the column of the ciborium. Christ, with a lovely, two-handled vessel, administers communion first to the young John, as is frequently the case in Macedonian wall-paintings of this period, behind whom, in a dense cluster, are the other apostles, all with a pose and expression of spiritual concentration and devotion to the sanctity of the moment.

Tsitouridou 1986, 73ff. Papamastorakis 1993-94.

140. *The Betrayal, 1310-1320.*

*Thessaloniki, Ayios Nikolaos Orphanos (nave, south wall).*

'Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests (and elders of the people)'. The Betrayal, the continuation of the Prayer in Gethsemane on the south wall of the nave, with the passage from Matthew (XXVI:47) written on the ground top left, is organized in a tight-knit, spectacular composition of a frenzied crowd pressing in from the right, 'with lanterns, torches and weapons', to arrest Christ. Commotion and violence reign on the Mount of Olives. The jostling throng forms an irregular, obtuse-angled triangle, undulating in passion and defining the impasse. Knives, spears, axes and clubs are furiously brandished in the air and a lantern in the middle marks the apex of the axis on which Christ moves. The Lord, in front of the human wall, calmly receives the betrayer's kiss that sets its seal on the arrest, which has already taken place, since the tribunos militum has laid his hands heavily on him from the right. Christ, a steadfast presence, addresses the irascible Peter, who has pinned Malchus to the ground with the knife to his ear, in front of the rock on the right



which separates the episodes, as in the same scene by Georgios Kalliergis in the church of Christ at Veroia; he dissuades him from the barbarous act. His tranquil visage dominates the icon, in striking contrast to the ugly face of Judas, shown in profile, who, rushing spasmodically with wide stride to give the kiss, turns his cunning gaze towards the viewer.

Tsitouridou 1986, 113ff.

*141. The Washing of the Feet, 1310-1320.*

*Thessaloniki, Ayios Nikolaos Orphanos (sanctuary, north wall).*

The gospel story, the basic theme of the painting in the nave, is developed in two iconographic cycles and an equal number of compositional registers, with the Dodekaorton above, in separate panels, and the Passion below, which intrudes into the upper register, as a rule with continuous narration. In unity with the Last Supper, the Washing of the Feet is depicted at the edge of the north side of the sanctuary, corresponding to the Prayer in Gethsemane and the Betrayal at the beginning of the south wall, opposite. Buildings rise up at the edges diagonally. At the left, Christ, in front of the basin, having laid down his himation and with the lention fastened round his waist, sponges Peter's right foot. The disciple protests with restrained gestures typical of the scene: 'Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!' (John XIII:9); and Christ, serene, his eyes fixed upon him, responds. The passage is written above, as in other representations in the church, where the didactic content of the stories is emphasized with excerpts from the sacred texts instead of a synoptic inscription of the subjects. Very similar to the contemporary wall-painting in the Chelandari Monastery, the arrangement of the disciples is inventive in its dialectical unity and ritual character, as they sit formally on the same semicircular bench, conversing animatedly and attentively following what is happening; all except Judas. He, identical to his figure in the Last Supper, distinct from the eleven, kneels on the floor in front and unties his sandal, his face in profile, in a type established for the scene; he has already cut himself off from the others with the deceitful thought of the betrayal in his mind.

Tsitouridou 1986, 110ff.

*142. The Wedding at Cana, 1310-1320.*

*Thessaloniki, Ayios Nikolaos Orphanos (south chapel, north wall).*

In the cycle of miracles, the Samaritan Woman in the

south chapel is followed by the Wedding at Cana, the most attractive representation in the church and one of the loveliest compositions of the age. Few-figured, clear and well-adapted, stressed with rich colour, it ceremonially renders the wedding feast at Cana in Galilee. Seated on a red cushion in the honorary position on the groom's right, Christ calmly responds to his mother who tells him the wine is saved, in an iconographic schema in which the Virgin is in exactly the same relation as in the contemporary wall-painting in Ayios Nikitas near Čučer. The small, restrained gestures and formal poses, the beauty of the newly-weds, the low wall behind that leaves the faces projected against the dark ground, the table with its little turned balusters in front and the ordered vessels and viands, give the refined composition an intentionally decorative aspect and enhance the symbolic, eucharistic meaning of the scene. The couple of the bride and groom glows with nobility of manners, with the gold wedding crowns and lovely, aristocratic garments adorned with pearls and precious stones, embroidery and gold appliqué. Above all, the bride is radiant at the centre of the table, in her elegant white, flower-bedecked wedding dress which illuminates the representation. Her delicate beauty, attire, modesty and grace have no equal in the representation of the scene.

Tsitouridou 1986, 136ff.

*143. The Miracles of St Nicholas at Sea, 1310-1320.*

*Thessaloniki, Ayios Nikolaos Orphanos (narthex, east wall).*

The painting programme in the church of the Orphanos, rich in iconographic cycles, is developed in its limited space in numerous representations virtually the size of portable icons, consistent with a trend current at the time. The two zones of compositions in a conspicuous position on the east side of the narthex are dedicated to the biographical cycle of the church's patron saint, with thirteen representations from his life and miracles. In a prominent place above the entrance to the nave, two of the extremely rare cycle of sea miracles are synoptically illustrated. Preceding them is the saint's intervention to save three innocent men from the executioner by snatching away his sword. The green, irregular banks rise up in eminences with stepped, flat-surfaced rocks at the edges above, and enclose the uniform expanse of sea on which two ships sail. On the one at the left, its billowing sail decorated with a cross, five sailors in brightly coloured garments row; Nicholas appears beside the mast in the middle, holding



on high a clay bottle of liquid which almost brought the ship to disaster. The charming representation is very occasionally depicted, and in a quite different type, in Post-Byzantine wall-paintings and icons. Further right, below, only a section of the other scene remains, with the masts of the ship and the furled sail, and St Nicholas bending down at the left. It is identified as the even rarer miracle of the relieving of the famine.

Tsitouridou 1986, 169ff.

*144. Christ and the Samaritan Woman, 1310-1320.  
Thessaloniki, Ayios Nikolaos Orphanos (south chapel, north wall).*

In the south chapel or aisle, in the two uppermost registers of compositions on the north wall where the decoration has survived, the miracles of Christ and his Encounter with the Woman of Samaria are illustrated in panels. Below are the Burning Bush and the rare story of Hosios Gerasimos and the lion. An arched opening separates Christ from the Samaritan woman in the middle of the second register. In the left part, Christ, who came thirsty to Jacob's well, sits on the rocks in the middle, imposing and erect in deep-coloured himatia, with his disciples standing in a dense group behind. He addresses the Samaritan woman opposite with a calm gesture of speech. She, surprised, her feet on the steps of the well and holding the pitcher with the rope above its round mouth, animatedly replies to him with hand raised. The momentary movement of her leaning figure, which describes an open arc in Christ's direction, indicates her immediate response to his words which quench the thirst of her soul. Impressive in her wordly appearance, with lovely, shoulder-length ringlets escaping from the head-covering in front and robes which fall in rich, even pleats; a deep green dress and a purple, classically-inspired peplos, beloved of Palaiologan art, with elegant knot at the top and fine fringing with little flowers on the border, the young woman is one of the most spectacular figures in the church.

Tsitouridou 1986, 138ff.

*145. Michael Astrapas and Eutychios, the Apostle Peter, 1317-1318.  
Staro Nagoričino, Ayios Georgios (nave, SW pillar).*

The last work bearing the signature of the accomplished Thessalonikan painters Michael Astrapas and Eutychios is the extensive decoration in the five-domed, Greek-cross

church of Ayios Georgios in the Serbian village of Staro Nagoričino, built at the expenses of King Stefan Milutin.

'St Peter' is depicted on the east side of the southern of the two large, cross-shaped pillars distinguishing the nave from the narthex, and is paired with St Paul, in the corresponding position on the north one. Full-length, in three-quarter pose, he holds a rolled scroll firmly in his left hand and with his right on his chest, in a gesture of blessing or speech, addresses the faithful, entering below. The light-coloured himation, with its combination of tight, linear folds and illumined planes, emphasizes the apostle's stout, sturdy figure, describing with clear modelling the movement of the limbs, and falls free over his left arm, undulating broadly and gracefully at the edges. The type, features and expression of the face, modelled with facility in somewhat heavy relief, as well as the artistic style, denote the more general affinity of the wall-paintings of Ayios Georgios with those in Ayios Nikolaos Orphanos at Thessaloniki.

*146. Michael Astrapas and Eutychios, St James the Persian, 1317-1318.  
Staro Nagoričino, Ayios Georgios (nave, SW pillar).*

St James the Persian is depicted full-length and in frontal pose, at the left on the same side of the south-west pillar as the Apostle Paul. His figure suitably adapted to the narrow surface available, he holds the cross of martyrdom to his chest and brings his left hand hidden by the purple, ample cloak which falls regularly, covering the sloping shoulders, and also the robe girdled at the waist, in soft, deep, even folds that emphasize the saint's upright posture. The dark-coloured cloak is embellished with a bright, broad embroidered appliqué on the shoulders and the robe with a dickey in the same design of stylized rinceaux with flowers, typical in the decoration of the church. His noble appearance is completed by a round, conical hat of silk, in the same colour as the robe, edged with fur which comes down onto the forehead. The long hair falls in soft waves behind, leaving free the clearly modelled face with its short, forked beard, conventional features, and serious yet pleasant expression. A slight turn of the head and gaze in *contrapposto*, add vitality to the symmetrical figure that stands solid and serene, with an 'exotic' air, against the light blue ground.



147. *The Birth of the Virgin, 1318-1320.*

*Mount Athos, Chelandari Monastery, katholikon (nave, north choir).*

The decoration in the katholikon of the Serbian monastery of Chelandari, a domed cross-in-square church with side choirs of Athonite type, was executed at the expense of King Milutin by an outstanding painter, probably from Constantinople. The wall-paintings are for the most part covered by extensive over-painting carried out in 1803/4. Though there is over-painting in several places in the Birth of the Virgin, this follows figures of the Palaiologan representation without essential changes. In the formal setting, defined by the luxurious porches of the buildings in the background with the hanging pieces of cloth, the scene takes place with elements of courtly etiquette, in the composite iconographic type introduced in the early fourteenth century. Anne, right, takes with difficulty the glass offered her on a tray by the first of the four beautifully dressed maidens, who, in single file at a higher level behind the low partition, bring gifts and sweetmeats to the woman in confinement, while another cools her with a fan. Joachim stands supportively behind, and next to them is the cradle with the new-born babe, aligned parallel with the bed, with the nurse rocking and watching over it. In front of her, the midwife, sitting on the floor with the swaddled Mary in her lap, prepares the bath with her young helper. The composition is distinguished by a secular air and clarity of narration. The maidens above, from which the over-painting has been removed, are of measured, noble demeanour, with delicate, sensitively modelled faces, and dresses in pale shades with illumined planes and calm folds, in elegant contrast to the dark-coloured overgarments and the lovely Classicizing peplos of one of them.

Bogdanović - Djurić - Medaković 1987, 81ff.

148. *The Presentation of the Virgin, 1318-1320.*

*Mount Athos, Chelandari Monastery, katholikon (nave, south choir).*

The Presentation of the Virgin, in the south choir, is orientated towards the sanctuary of the church, with the adyton of the scene placed on the left in the representation. After the model of the Protaton, the parents of the Virgin are placed at the end of the procession. A high, decorated wall delimits the area of the temple, and in the light blue background the buildings hung with red cloths and the tree on the same axis as the infant Mary, as well as the elevated sanctuary left, wonderfully balance the composition

and the movement of the figures. The seven maidens with lighted candles lead the child Mary to the chief priest, an imposing old man standing in the wide-open, golden gates of the adyton. As part of the formal procession, the Virgin too holds a lighted candle, but is already isolated from her entourage as she walks, the pink peplos, held up by the three leading maidens, mystically spread out behind her. The element of the apocalyptic peplos is unprecedented in the scene, intensifying the ritual character of the occasion and marking the dedication of Mary in the temple of the Lord, with a mystical allusion to the grace of the Holy Spirit which surrounds the Virgin with glory, analogous with the illustration of oikos IV of the Akathistos Hymn. In the Holy of Holies, the Virgin, seated high up on a marble throne, receives with covered hands the holy bread offered to her by the flying, full-length angel under the ciborium. Rhythmicality of composition, decorative nobility and narrative power, the dialogical correlation of figures, the energetic pose of the Virgin in her two appearances and the bold, sideways position of the two maidens, enliven the representation with the aristocratic grace of Constantinopolitan art.

149. *Saints Demetrios, Prokopios and Eustathios, 1318-1320.*

*Mount Athos, Chelandari Monastery, katholikon (nave, south choir).*

Depicted in the conch of the south choir, below the Presentation of the Virgin, are the full-length military saints, Demetrios, Prokopios and Eustathios. On the white, dividing band above is the accompanying eloquent inscription 'We serve the lord of hosts', in Greek and in Serb. The three saints are of comely aspect, panoplied, in handsome, gold-embroidered uniforms, their lively, harmonious movements and poses aptly suited to their figures, with cloaks billowing out to the side and behind in rich, broad folds. They are armed with shield with embossed decoration, spear and sword in various poses and positions, and Prokopios also has a bow in its case and a quiver full of arrows, which cross behind as they hang from straps at the waist. Gentle, elegant and sophisticated figures in the fashion of the art of the period, in lovely bright colours, their bodies are slim and robust, their step light. The relief of the face is sensitively modelled and the expression noble. Variations of them, with the same deportment, poses and armament, are familiar from contemporary wall-paintings. Their refined painting, distinctive of



the monastery in general, in its excellent quality and inspired style, can perhaps only be compared with the wall-paintings in the Chora Monastery at Constantinople and in the Ayioi Apostoloi at Thessaloniki, a work most probably of a painter from the Capital, as that at Chelandari may well be too.

*150. Peter's Denial and Pilate's Washing of the Hands, 1st half of the 14th cent.*

*Peć, Ayioi Apostoloi (nave, west vault).*

The decoration of the patriarchal church at Peć (see also no. 84-87) continued in the fourteenth century. The theme of the paintings in the west arm of the cross of the Ayioi Apostoloi is the impressive cycle of the Passion. On the north side of the vault Peter's Denial, after the Judgement of Caiaphas, and Pilate's Washing of the Hands, complete the events in the trial of the Lord. The crowded, multi-figural representations are in continuous narration, the composition is tightly knit and theatrical in perception, and there is a pronounced sense of drama. In Peter's Denial, the four episodes in the court of the chief priest are symmetrically interwoven in their temporal succession with the imposing edifice that dominates the scene. The charming, monochrome figure on the lintel of the gateway with the vaulted porch refers to the popular Classical traditions of Palaiologan art. The spectacular 'cock' atop the pillar at the edge emphatically notes the breaking of promises and Peter's pain. In Pilate's Washing of the Hands, Christ is brought as a prisoner to the procurator in front of the praetorium, who washes his hands in embarrassment, which action signifies the condemnation of the innocent man. However, in a peculiar interpretation of the theme, the interest of those present, behind, is obviously turned elsewhere. With disturbed gestures and gazes the onlookers react to the appearance of Pilate's wife in the arched window of the building, and of the maidservant below, who bears the message of Procla's inauspicious dream. The heavy, exaggerated hands and feet, the rendering of the coarse faces with rather stereotyped physiognomies and the linear articulation of the drapery on the garments rather awkwardly characterize figures with an emphasis on plasticity and vitality, in the dramatized interlinking of the compositions, which are associated with wall-paintings by Michael Astrapas and Eutychios.

Ljubinković 1964, XIIIff.

*151. The Nativity, c.1360-1370.*

*Mystras, Peribleptos (nave, vault of the south cross arm).*

The Peribleptos, once the katholikon of a monastery, is in the type of a two-columned cross-in-square church with dome, like the earlier church of Ayia Sophia (Christos Zoodotis) in the Palace, built before 1365 by the first despot of the Morea, Manuel Cantacuzenos (1348-1380). It is the only one of the churches at Mystras entirely decorated with wall-paintings, and these have survived virtually intact. The compositions are dense and rich, organized in large iconographic unities: the eucharistic cycle in the sanctuary, the Christological cycle of the Dodekaorton on the surfaces of the arms of the cross, the prophets around the dome lauding the glory of the Pantokrator and the Virgin; the cycle of the Passion, and the extensive cycle of the Virgin – to whom the church is dedicated – in the lateral bays; and saints, with numerous military saints, in the nave. The cycle of the major gospel feasts commences with the Nativity, on the east side of the vault of the south arm of the cross. The mountain seems to be alive, with its cast, tumbling rocks and clusters of tiny planes at the summits, its caves and sparse flowering shrubs, as it climbs up into the sky where a ray of light from the *segmentum coeli* on high filters as far as the divine babe swaddled in the manger, wisely lighting the way of the Magi on horseback. The angels above, with their olive-green wings, characteristic of the Peribleptos, praise God, bring glad tidings to the shepherds and piously pay homage to the 'true light'. In the middle, on a mattress, the Virgin moves in the blue with the grace of the stars and is held on high in the worship of the faithful. A shepherd boy on the rock at the right charms the sheep with his pipe. Below, Joseph, deep in thought, listens to the old shepherd; the dedicated midwife and Salome prepare the infant's bath. The figures are dispersed in circular disposition in the dominant landscape of the mountain, in the episodes which make up the scene, and resound with gay colour contrasts on the garments, stressed in the bright blue and wine-red. The Nativity, like the Dormition of the Virgin and other representations in the Peribleptos, crystallizes a Palaiologan iconographic type which was to flourish in the fifteenth century in Cretan art, with different interpretations of style and composition. The sensitive painting, the chromatic harmony and the poetry of the frescoes in the Peribleptos blossom in another clime of artistic form and creation.

Chatzidakis 1992, 73ff.



152. *The Baptism, c.1360-1370.*

*Mystras, Peribleptos (nave, vault of the south cross arm).*

The Baptism is depicted opposite the Nativity, on the west side of the vault of the south arm of the cross. The rugged mountains of the wilderness rise up with jagged rocks at their peaks that diverge at the edges, the river Jordan passing between them. Its uneven banks disappear left; discernible high up in the mountain is the personification of the river's source, a small, naked, seated female figure pouring water from a large vessel. Jesus, entering lower down, converses with John who bows before him. Below is the tree with the axe. He who is 'by nature immaculate', naked and with his legs crossed, is baptized by St John the Baptist at the left, in order to save the world from sin with 'the bath of regeneration'. The waters are blessed, the heavens open, the mountains tremble, the universe is illumined. A host of angels, drawn in miniature, hold open the portals in the *segmentum coeli*, which are decorated with other angels in russet monochrome, and mark out in adoration the pathway of the voice of God and the Holy Spirit. Three angels descend the mountain at the right; charming figures, their hands covered by the himation, they pay homage 'in fear and admiration'. The dense groups of people with children below are spectators and participants in the joyous Theophany, and other children swim happily in the blessed waters, between the colourful fish. They constitute elements which heighten the picturesque plasticity and the symbolisms of the scene, together with the personification of the crowned Sea and the old man Jordan at the edges of the water in front, who realize the prophecy of the psalms.

153. *The Dormition of the Virgin, c.1360-1370.*

*Mystras, Peribleptos (nave, north wall).*

On the north side, above the entrance to the church, the Dormition of the Virgin spreads out in a large, multi-figural composition. Flowing in its narrative symmetry, the colours give a breath of sweetness and there is a strong emotional tone. The Virgin on the high bed with its red cover, is glorified in the light of the candles burning before her. The apostles, 'gathered here from the ends of the world', borne on high in the clouds, surround her with the dignity of a lament. St Peter censes her with funerary hymns, St John the Theologian pays homage and St Paul bows at her feet. Higher up, the hierarchs, on either side, celebrate the funerary rites. At the right edge her women friends

chant a discreet dirge. At the other edge the angels, in formal order, honour the Virgin as Queen of the Angels, Platytera of the Heavens. An archangel in miniature, in front, cuts off the hand of Jephonias, who tried to defile the immaculate corpse. And in the middle, Christ appears in a blue heavenly mandorla, with his satellite angels, and receives his mother's soul. Her blue mandorla is held up by two flying angels in an emblem of archaic type. Behind the figures congregated in the scene is a heavy, oppressive, curvilinear wall linked with higher buildings set diagonally at the ends. In its windows, depicted in miniature, young figures 'of the entire world' come out to follow with reverence and sorrow the Virgin's departure.

154. *The Divine Liturgy, c.1360-1370.*

*Mystras, Peribleptos (sanctuary, prothesis).*

In the prothesis a superb Divine Liturgy, which in this period assumed a prominent position in the dome, depicts the climactic moment of the Great Entry. Priests and angel deacons are exceptional in their dense rhythmical arrangement; with one breath in the mystery of light and airy movement, 'elevated and winged', they bear the Sacraments in a long procession on the walls, beginning and ending at Christ who officiates in the apse, beneath the ciborium of the altar. Higher up, the Holy Spirit and the Ancient of Days, with the cherubim, stand together with Christ the High Priest in the depiction of the 'life-giving and indivisible' Trinity. Below, Christ, in the type of the Man of Sorrows, is 'the offerer and the offered' of the cherubic blessing, in the place of sacrifice where the saintly hierarchs concelebrate.

155. *The Nativity, c.1428.*

*Mystras, Monastery of the Pantanassa, katholikon (nave, south cross arm).*

The Pantanassa, to this day the katholikon of a famous monastery, was consecrated in 1428. The initials of its outstanding founder: "Ο κτήτωρ Ἰωάννης Φραγγόπουλος πρωτοστράτωρ καὶ καθολικός μεσάζων" (The founder Ioannis Frangopoulos, protostrator and catholic intermediary), appear in its interior and on the west side of the exterior, and written at the base of the dome of the narthex is his metrical foundation inscription. The church is of the same architectural type as the Hodegetria, a combination of three-aisle basilica and five-domed Greek-cross church, and analogous is the articulation of the painting programme, a large part of which has survived in the upper



storey. The Virgin *Platytera* adorns the sanctuary apse, the gospel feasts the vaults of the arms of the cross and of the sanctuary, and associated representations the faces of the walls; prophets and patriarchs with cherubim and the seventy apostles on the surfaces of the gallery.

Depicted on the vault of the south arm of the cross are the Annunciation on the east side and the Nativity on the west. The similarities in iconography between the Nativity here and the previous one in the *Peribleptos*, with the most substantial change in the opposite placement of the Virgin, which follows the transfer of the bath to the right in the *Pantanassa*, stress precisely the fundamental difference in the conception of their decoration. To the idealistic and highly poetic picture of the Nativity in the *Peribleptos*, the painter of the *Pantanassa* counters a composition pulsating with life and of modelled disposition, with rationalistic consistency and unity in narration, which records with unusual interest in genre representations the realistic activities of the persons – familiar in both their veracity and their idyllic quaintness, particularly on the periphery of the scene. The fresh green, which in combination with chestnut brown characterizes the coloration of the *Pantanassa* wall-paintings, adds a verdant note to the mountain massif which spreads with sharp and curving lines, small terraces for the figures. At the bottom left, the seated Joseph boldly turns his back to the viewer, making lively gestures as he looks at the young shepherd with the broad-rimmed hat, as if informing him of the supernatural event, while he, tall and thin, walks along lightly, nonchalantly blowing his horn. The 'new-born child', 'the eternal Word' is praised 'by angels and shepherds'; in the other episodes too, the transubstantial and wondrous is treated with a sense of vitality and a rare perception of human nature.

Mouriki 1991, 220ff. Chatzidakis 1992, 95ff.

#### 156. *The Entry into Jerusalem, c.1428.*

*Mystras, Monastery of the Pantanassa, katholikon (nave, vault of the east cross arm).*

The representation fills the north side of the vault of the east arm of the cross, in front of the sanctuary, corresponding to the *Anastasis* opposite. A monumental composition, with height and breadth, transforms the iconographic model of the *Peribleptos* with another quality of space and sense of drama, enriched with details and elements that enliven the narration with descriptive clarity. The castle of Bethany in the background, a strong chro-

matic presence in the balance of the composition, is half hidden in the mountains. At the right rises the castle of Jerusalem, with its luxurious monuments in perspective, the spectators, in miniature, on the battlements and at the windows. At the left, the two disciples return with the foal and the ass, which follow somewhat reluctantly, projected in the curve of the mountain. 'Behold, your king is coming to you, lowly and sitting on a colt, the foal of an ass'. The Jews, a colourful throng with their children in their arms, come forth from the gates of the holy city to meet Jesus, 'with branches of palm trees and chanting hymns'. The verdant setting is filled with the happy movement of children chanting 'Hosanna'. They play freely, overjoyed at the festive atmosphere; they remove their garments and spread them on the ground for the Lord to pass; they frolic in front of the rocks and scramble up into the trees, where they hastily cut down palm fronds; one hangs daringly from a branch, his back to the viewer. 'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings I shall compose a hymn of praise'.

Mouriki 1991, 221ff.

#### 157-158. *The Ascension, c.1428.*

*Mystras, Monastery of the Pantanassa, katholikon (sanctuary vault).*

Magnificent, also in its exceptional decorativeness, the Ascension is represented, as usual, in the sanctuary vault, its tripartite, symmetrical arrangement emphasized by the virtually equal heights of the tops of the trees set out on the Mount of Olives in the two groups of six apostles. The figures of the apostles slant slightly upwards towards the centre, as dictated by the arched openings of the gallery, exalting the Virgin higher up in the middle with the angel beside her. The second angel, on the other side, announces to the disciples 'thus he will come, as ye did see him, moving in the sky'. The apostles, dazzled, amazed, disturbed, with lively and intense gestures, impetuous poses and modelled torsion, and with light and colours brightly jubilant on the garments, gaze on high, where 'God ascended to a cry of joy, the Lord to the sound of a trumpet'. The mandorla of Christ enthroned on the rainbow is held by four angels, their sun-burnished wings thrust into the sky.



159. *The Archangel Michael, 1483.*

*Meteora, Monastery of the Great Meteoron, katholikon (nave, north wall).*

The two-columned, domed, cross-in-square church of Christ the Saviour, the old katholikon of the Great Meteoron Monastery, forms the sanctuary of the present katholikon of the Metamorphosis. The original building of Hosios Athanasios the Meteorite, the founder of the first monastery in the monastic state, was rebuilt in 1387/88 by his successor the monk Ioasaph, in secular life John Uresis Palaiologos of Thessaly. Its interior is covered with wall-paintings of 1483.

On the right of those entering from the once open doorway in the north side, above the lintel of which is the foundation inscription, the guardian angel of the old katholikon, Archangel Michael, stands sentinel below the painted arch, a grand and formidable figure. Well-balanced, he stands on a crimson cushion-footstool, his legs set wide apart, his trunk arched backwards like a bow and his head turned in *contrapposto* to face whoever comes through the entrance. In his right hand he brandishes the sword, on which his name is written, and with his left holds up the unfurled scroll with the admonition 'To those without clean hearts who come to the clean house of God, I extend my sword without sympathy'. In the soft smooth modelling of the face, its rather rectangular shape and its fine features an Italian Renaissance model can be discerned. His cuirass is embellished with large, lovely, monochrome motifs which, like the way it snugly fits his broad-breasted torso, bring to mind breastplates of the Comnenian era. Other, more delicate patterns decorate the hilt of the sword which hangs at his right. The scarlet cloak, that gives the figure weight, is fastened with a knot at the side; the line of the long wings is parallel with the arch above; the short tunic flaps back in the movement, exposing the thigh. Expansive and impetuous, noble and haughty, the Archangel Michael is perhaps the most impressive figure in the church.

Chatzidakis - Sophianos 1990, 20ff., 34ff. Georgitsoyanni 1992, 284ff.

160. *The Deesis, 1483.*

*Meteora, Monastery of the Great Meteoron, katholikon (nave, south cross arm).*

In the south arm of the cross, the row of military saints on the south side below, who are shown standing under arches, in splendid costumes of the nobles of the period, ends with St John the Baptist at the head, in the Deesis. Christ

and the Virgin are exalted on the east side; Christ in the type of a devotional icon, as patron of the church, in a higher position in the blind arch. The iconographic presence of the saints, the arcaded arrangement, the narrow overlying register of saints in roundels, and the representation of Christ King of Glory, are among the elements which link the decoration with wall-paintings in Kastoria, such as in Ayios Athanasios Mouzaki, 1383/84, and determine the urban roots and provenance of the fifteenth-century atelier which produced its finest work at Meteora. In the apocalyptic Deesis, Christ sits imposing and serene on a carved throne similar to that of the Judge in the Last Judgement, of 1388, on the north outer side of the nave. The 'Suppliant' Virgin, with rich, rhythmically overfolded rows of fringing on the border of her maphorion, alluding to the heavenly queen of Psalm 45, intercedes with Christ for the salvation of the mortals, with the dialogue in her open scroll 'Receive the supplication of thy mother, thou merciful one'. And the Lord promises 'they shall have redemption'.

Georgitsoyanni 1992, 272ff.

161. *The Crucifixion, 1483.*

*Meteora, Monastery of the Great Meteoron, katholikon (sanctuary, vault of the north cross arm).*

In the old katholikon of the Great Meteoron, the Crucifixion appears in the vault of the north arm of the cross. A few-figured, off-center composition, vital and expressive in its symbolism, it is markedly dramatic in character. The lifeless Christ on the cross constitutes the axis of the scene, his body thrust out in the last throes of death. His type, with decorated loincloth, and the centurion's banner attest the influence of Italian art. The Virgin, on a footstool, abandoned to grief and with loosened hair, her maphorion drawn inwards in agitated curves, leans and is held by a weeping woman companion. John too bends close to the cross, clasping his face in his hands, and the centurion behind bears witness to the divinity. In the background, in heavy relief, is the wall of Jerusalem with niches and battlements; in the dark sky the sun and moon hide their face; at the edges the lamenting angels with red wings held high face one another symmetrically. A queen, in miniature, the 'New Testament', collects the blood and water from the wound in Christ's side, and the 'Old Testament', in the guise of an aged king, leaves right with the tablets of the law. Adam, primal recipient of the



sacrifice on the cross, is represented corporeal, an old man naked to the waist in the cave of Golgotha. With his hands on his head he washes his hair and is expiated with the drops of Christ's life-giving blood. Around him is the inscription 'According to the Scripture, humanity has been recalled after being washed with the divine blood of Christ'. The rare representation of him is repeated in a few sixteenth-century wall-paintings, while in the fifteenth century it occurs in another iconographic type in the Italo-Cretan icon JHS, by Andreas Ritzos, in the Byzantine Museum, Athens.

Georgitsoyanni 1992, 150ff.

*162. The Anastasis, 1483.*

*Meteora, Monastery of the Great Meteoron, katholikon (sanctuary, vault of the north cross arm).*

The Anastasis is depicted opposite the Crucifixion on the vault of the north arm of the cross, in the old katholikon. The gold-clad Saviour, in the depths of Hell, raises up Adam, left. The light of the elliptical mandorla, in parallel with his movement, dominates the mouth of the cave, which is almost blocked by the mountains converging above. The events taking place within are shown in panoramic view, with planes rising towards the background and uncertain exaggerated perspective, in the lively and multi-figural composition which opens up to the believer and makes him a participant in the great joy. Eve and Abel, Aaron with the flowering rod in a rare appearance here, St John the Baptist, the prophet-kings and prophets, with merry aspect, supplicate, observe, converse with one another. The broken bronze gates, locks and bolts stand out in the flaming abyss, at the left edge a devil in inelegant pose drowns and 'falls into a pit', the graves open, the mountains quiver. A small angel in the mountains holds the vessel with the precious blood and water of Christ, collected by the New Testament in the Crucifixion, other angels, right, watch what is taking place. Among the peculiar traits of the representation is the enigmatic veiled noblewoman, unknown elsewhere, next to Eve, whom Christ addresses. Perhaps the figure is the personification of the New Testament-Ekklesia, whose symbolic presence in the Anastasis is noted in a different manner in affined wall-paintings of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, though it could also be 'the holy day' or the 'queen and mistress, feast of feasts'.

Georgitsoyanni 1992, 165ff. Antonopoulos 1993-94.

*163, 165. Theophanis Strelitzas Bathas, St James the Persian, 1527.*

*Meteora, Monastery of Ayios Nikolaos Anapafsas, katholikon (nave, south cross arm).*

The small monastery of Ayios Nikolaos Anapafsas is housed in a high, rectangular building, on the middle floor of which is its church, of cross-in-square type with blind dome and flat-roofed narthex-lite. The rich painted decoration of the humble katholikon was completed in October 1527. The foundation inscription preserves the signature of the painter: 'χείρ Θεοφάνη μοναχοῦ τοῦ ἐν τῇ Κρήτῃ Στρελίτζας' (hand of Theophanis monk Strelitzas of Crete). The very important wall-paintings in the Anapafsas, the earliest known by Theophanis, establish the presence in mainland Greece of the famous painter whose work was to embellish in the following decades the splendid and beautiful monasteries of Mount Athos. Included in the ranks of the military saints, martyrs and other saints represented standing in the bottom zone of the decoration is St James the Persian, on the south side of the south arm of the cross. 'Young with forked beard', as he is described in the old Painter's Manual, he is depicted beneath an arch, as are other saints in the church. In frontal pose, his legs apart with the right relaxed and slightly to the fore, he lifts the cross of martyrdom to the side, to the level of his head, and with his left hand holds the edge of his cloak in front. With the secular garb of an exotic prince, the easterner James, in a Cretan model of the fifteenth century, stands out among the other saints in the church, in his many and richly ornamented garments with tubular sleeves of foreign style, that fall heavily to the sides, and peculiar headdress. Slim-bodied, with the calm, elegant and imposing stance of a person of status, his serious and reflective gaze is directed towards the viewer.

Chatzidakis 1969-70, 315ff.

*164. Theophanis Strelitzas Bathas, St Christopher, 1527.*

*Meteora, Monastery of Ayios Nikolaos Anapafsas, katholikon (nave, south cross arm).*

St Christopher, on the west side of the south arm of the cross in the nave of the church, is depicted full-length in the zone of saints below. His figure is distinguished on the spacious surface by a quatrefoil arch, in contrast to the semicircular arches of the other saints, very like those in the old katholikon of the Great Meteoron. A rare figure in ecclesiastical wall-paintings, who is noted from the late



thirteenth century in the church of Ayios Georgios at Pera Chalki, Naxos, he appears in the Anapafsas Monastery inspired by a Venetian model, adapted to the Orthodox representation, which was, in turn, to be the model for subsequent painters. Christopher is presented in a synoptic, narrative scene, declaratory of his name, carrying the Christ Child on his shoulder across the river, leaning on his tall staff which sprouted leaves, revealing the divine nature of the child. Christ holds his hand on the head of the blessed saint. Endowed with physical beauty, tall and sturdy, Christopher wears short aquamarine trousers, a blue garment fastened to the waist with round buttons, which is crossed over in front, caught and lifted up at the sides to leave the bare legs free in the river, forming lovely, symmetrical, folds; a red cloak, also short, billows out broadly with rhythmical overfolds at the edges, marking the movement of the gently modelled figure. Proceeding leftwards, he turns his head towards Christ and his deep, meditative gaze, characteristic of Theophanis's saints, meets that of the viewer clear and bright.

Chatzidakis 1969-70, 333.

*166-167. Theophanis Strelitzas Bathas, the Dormition of Hosios Ephraim the Syrian, 1527.*

*Meteora, Monastery of Ayios Nikolaos Anapafsas, katholikon (narthex, north wall).*

Represented in a broad composition in the top register of the decoration in the narthex is the Dormition of Hosios Ephraim the Syrian, after an iconographic model popular in Cretan portable icons of the second half of the fifteenth century, based on a Palaiologan archetype. Theophanis faithfully adheres to the Cretan icon model, with minimal interventions and simplifications in the details of the theme, his limited initiative manifest mainly in the perspective effect in the landscape. 'The Synaxis of the Dormition of St Ephraim', according to the inscription, takes place in the desert, to the fore. Sorrowing, high-rank monks and anchorites are gathered closely around the saint's shrouded corpse, on which an icon of Christ in the type of the Man of Sorrows has been placed, and celebrate the proper rites; as the priest-monk, left, comes to the end of the requiem mass, the monk beyond reads the 'Come and give the last kiss ...' The rounded hills and forbidding, cave-riddled mountain tops are enlivened by the population of desert monks in graphic scenes, on a smaller scale, which record with incidents of their life devoted

to the divine, the repercussion of the event, their mobilization and their arrival in a steady stream at the formal synaxis. Old men meditate, pray, converse and toil in their caves, and prepare for the departure, notified by the monk who turns and strikes the semantron, and others, feeble and in great old age, arrive on a stretcher, on animals, one on the back of his subordinate and another crawling with the arms. High up in the middle, a stylite is shown, with his subordinate preparing to haul up the basket of food. An angel flies in heaven, with Ephraim's soul in his hands.

Chatzidakis 1969-70, 330.

*168-170. Theophanis Strelitzas Bathas, Adam Naming the Animals, 1527.*

*Meteora, Monastery of Ayios Nikolaos Anapafsas, katholikon (narthex, north wall).*

Below the Dormition of Hosios Ephraim the Syrian, in the narthex, extends the equally wide representation from the Creation cycle, with Adam in Paradise, where God had put him 'to tend and keep it', naming the animals (Genesis II:8-20). 'So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field.' The subject, rare in monumental painting, as well as its independent position, are very possibly due to the preference of the abbot of the monastery at the time, 'τοῦ ὁσιωτάτου ἐν ἱερομονάχοις κύρι Νικάνορος καὶ ἐξάρχου Σταγῶν' (of the holiest among monks and exarch of Stagoi, Sire Nikanor), according to the dedicatory inscription. In a bright counterbalance to the Dormition of Ephraim, the felicitous image of Paradise offers a field of didactic analogies and spiritual contemplation. The protoplast Adam, seated naked on a rocky outcrop, stretches out his hand and calls the animals by their name. All are in front of him: first there is the 'most sagacious' serpent, then the great elephant, with its long tusks and its gaze directed at the viewer, the lion, the golden dragon with wings of flame, the antelope, the horse, the camel with the owl, also present in the Dormition of Ephraim, perched on its hump, and many others; the peacock and all manner of fowl of the sky are in the trees, some pecking the fruits. Small bushes with flowers and trees with fruit grow 'in the garden of delights', which is closed by a mighty wall in front. Adam, a serene figure, and the tame beasts, animals and birds, are described with clear outlines, in vigorous form and pose, against the white ground. The young



Adam, 'just growing a beard', the soul of the poetic picture, with fine, spare modelling and in colour 'from the earth', has a smiling, airy expression and the fresh spirit of life.

Chatzidakis 1969-70, 329ff.

*171. Christ Rebuking the Wind and the Sea, 1531/32(?).*

*The Island of Ioannina, Philanthropinon Monastery, katholikon (nave, north wall).*

The katholikon of the Philanthropinon Monastery is entirely covered with wall-paintings from at least three painting phases of the sixteenth century. The Tempest forms part of the very wide Christological cycle in the initial decoration of the aisleless nave and belongs in the unit of the miracles, on the north wall. The boat is in danger on the stormy sea. Christ is asleep in the stern; Peter wakes him. In the middle, the Lord raises his right hand and rebukes the wind, which wanders on the inhospitable banks as an evil demon and sends the whirlwind with a long horn, and calms the sea. Thus the omnipotence of Christ, whom the elements of nature obey, is revealed to his disciples of little faith. The iconography of the scene here, as of wall-paintings of the same subject in the Meteora Monastery of Anapafsas and the Great Lavra on Mount Athos, with its lively tone and precision of details, draws on a fifteenth-century Cretan model, such as St Phanourios's miracle at sea, in an icon by the painter Angelos.

Acheimastou-Potamianou 1983, 63.

*172. The Feeding of the Five Thousand, 1531/32(?).*

*The Island of Ioannina, Philanthropinon Monastery, katholikon (nave, north wall).*

The representation, from the cycle of the miracles in the original decoration of the nave, has a well-formed and tightly woven fabric, and a mystagogical atmosphere appropriate to its symbolic eucharistic character. Christ blesses the five loaves and two fish, and Peter, opposite, bows before him, John and James, right, distribute the loaves to the dense groups of the orderly, awaiting multitude. The light describes with a fine, nervous line the fractured planes of the rocks on the precipitous peaks rising up in succession in the background, and of the others which are cut off abruptly below, and silvers the folds of the garments. In front, the women sitting on their knees, one suckling a babe, an impatient, demanding, hungry child, capture the immediacy of natural observation, which tempers the hieratic seriousness of the scene. The succinct

narration is quite different from the Late Byzantine representations of the theme, with the multitude in many and diverse groups, from which it derives its main iconographic elements.

Acheimastou-Potamianou 1983, 65ff.

*173. The Road to Calvary, 1531/32(?).*

*The Island of Ioannina, Philanthropinon Monastery, katholikon (nave, north wall).*

The initial decoration of the monastery is probably the earliest surviving and most perfectly modelled work of the local Epirote School, of which the principal, primary centre is located in the close environs of Ioannina. Diversity and luxury of elements, elegant drawing, a realistic perception, and the dramatic character of the events compose a zenithal work in which the appeal of the international Gothic style is diffuse. Iconographic types of many representations are completed here, such as the preceding ones of the Judgement and the Road to Calvary, which, in addition to Cretan exempla, draw on those of Palaiologan art and of the years after the Fall of Constantinople, to create the School's models for subsequent wall-paintings. The representation of the Road to Calvary dominates the last unit of the cycle of the Passion on the north side, which concludes with the Entombment on the east wall of the prothesis. The long, tripartite procession from Jerusalem ascends Golgotha at a brisk pace, the horses galloping. In the van, are Simon of Cyrene and the two robbers, carrying crosses, and the blacksmith with the instruments of the Passion in the basket. In the middle, Jesus, bound at the neck and hands, is dragged, accompanied by soldiers and accusers. In the rear, on horseback, are Pilate, with the trumpeter before him, and his entourage. The Virgin's lament reverberates from the crystalline mountain peaks, and in the scroll of Isaiah on high is the prophetic text: 'He was led as a lamb to the slaughter'.

Acheimastou-Potamianou 1983, 83ff., 201ff.

*174. The Betrayal, 1531/32(?).*

*The Island of Ioannina, Philanthropinon Monastery, katholikon (nave, south wall).*

In the initial decoration of the katholikon the story of the Virgin and Christ is developed according to Palaiologan models, in a continuous narrative, as in a frieze, in two successive zones of compositions running round the walls of the nave and the sanctuary. The wide cycle of the



Passion and the Anastasis, which occupies the entire lower zone, above the processional alignment of saints, has the predominant position. The Betrayal, the size of a portable icon, like all the representations, closes the first unit of the Passion on the south wall. Interlinked with the Prayer in Gethsemane, it is developed – as it rarely is – in four episodes, which condense the gospel narrative, and consistent with Late Byzantine iconographic models. Towards the top, the persecutors meet Christ, left, to whom Judas points, and the frightened disciples flee right. In the centre, the Betrayal, the 'hour and the power of darkness' (Luke XXII:53). The closely packed group is moved by tumult, passion and violence, echoed in the clashing planes of the heavy massif of the mountain behind. Christ, to the fore, a slender figure with gold halo, surrenders himself, with a movement of volition, to Judas's kiss, while with a gesture of speech he deters Peter, bottom right, whose knife is poised above Malchus's ear.

Acheimastou-Potamianou 1983, 74ff.

175. *The Judgement of Pilate, 1531/32(?)*.

*The Island of Ioannina, Philanthropinon Monastery, katholikon (nave, west wall).*

In the next unit of the cycle of the Passion, on the west wall, the successive Judgements of the High Priests, Pilate and Herod, with the interpolation of Peter's Denial, narrate with didactic emphasis, and frequently excessive expression, the events of the Trial of Christ, according to Palaiologan models. A detachment of soldiers brings Jesus before Pontius Pilate. In front, an accuser of the Jewish priesthood gesticulates excitedly. The procurator, seated right in majesty, in pearl-encrusted crown and garments, passing the hand on the waist in pride, addresses the exhausted Christ. The formal buildings of the praetorium behind define the setting, order the composition, heighten the impression of entrapment, just as the flood of red on the garments of Pilate and the High Priest, the accuser, overtly adds to the scene the sense of power over the blood of the innocent man. To its feigned threat, opposite, the sky-blue himation, the purple chiton and the gold halo of Christ imperturbably mark the strength of the spirit and the divine will.

Acheimastou-Potamianou 1983, 78ff.

176. *Theophanis Strelitzas Bathas, the Carrying of the Ark of the Covenant, 1546.*

*Mount Athos, Stavronikita Monastery, katholikon (sanctuary, south wall).*

Adorning the sides of the sanctuary of the domed, cross-in-square katholikon of the monastery, are two large compositions from the Old Testament, 'The Ark raised in the city of Jerusalem' and 'The Ark raised by the priests', prefigurative representations of the Virgin as the 'living ark', who appears in majesty on high in the apse in the glory of the Incarnation, enthroned and accompanied by archangels. A medallion with the Virgin in bust and Christ is depicted on the ark, in miniature and in light grisaille. The Carrying of the Ark into Jerusalem (Kings I, VIII:1-16) is one of the loveliest scenes in the church. Below the mountains, right, in the foreground, the dark-coloured Uzzah, who erred, puts out his hand to the ark and then falls down dead, struck by the wrath of God. At the centre, in lambent colours and singing, 'David and all the house of Israel playing music before the Lord on all kinds of instruments', bring the ark to Jerusalem, which rises up behind, a walled city with its gate wide open. High up in a doorway Saul's daughter Michal, shown in miniature, leans over to watch the procession. With restrained dramaticism and accuracy of narration, Theophanis creates a clear and replete composition, in strong colours, enriched with all manner of musical instruments which add a gaily realistic note to the scene. The representation, rather a rare one, is encountered in the Cretan wall-paintings on Mount Athos – the earlier work by Theophanis in the Great Lavra, and in the monasteries of Dionysiou and Docheiariou – and with the same model in the Barlaam Monastery at Meteora and in the Philanthropinon Monastery.

Chatzidakis 1986, 49, 80ff.

177. *Theophanis Strelitzas Bathas, the Angel of the Lord, 1546.*

*Mount Athos, Stavronikita Monastery, katholikon (nave, SW corner bay).*

The ceilings of the small corner bays of the nave, the two west and east of the parabemata, are decorated with angels of the Lord, like the one in the north-west bay. This angel is depicted, like the others, to just below the loins, as if projecting in an opening of the night sky, unexpectedly illuminating, with his gold halo and radiant aspect, the black of the background. In frontal pose, with flame-red wings and a cool green robe, the figure seems alive in the



space, slightly moving. The heavenly emissary, in formal, gold-embellished garments and imperial, gem-studded loros, holds with open hands the insignia of 'Christ King of All', the sceptre and the orb with Christ's monogram, in the iconographic type crystallized since Byzantine times, outstanding examples being the fourteenth-century grandiose angels in the chapel of the Chora Monastery at Constantinople. Heavy folds and dense chiaroscuro characterize the sixteenth-century figure.

*178. Theophanis Strelitzas Bathas, Saints George and Demetrios, 1546.*

*Mount Athos, Stavronikita Monastery, katholikon (nave, south wall).*

In the church's rich iconographic programme, the host of saints in the lower parts, as well as in upper zones, is also dictated by the singular features of the building. A special position is accorded the full-length military saints who solemnly adorn the lower register of the walls in the nave. Outstanding among them are the popular figures of George and Demetrios, in the place of honour at the beginning of the group, in front of the iconostasis on the south side. The young saints, a well-matched pair, stand *en face*, with the same gestures and parallel, slightly rightwards pose and discreet confrontation of the face, in *contrapposto* movement. Like the others, these champions of the faith are depicted in full panoply. In their right hand they hold a spear; with the left George steadies a bow on the ground and Demetrios a sword with a cross on the scabbard. A helmet hangs behind the shoulder of the former, a small round shield behind that of the latter. The ethos is noble and modest, the gaze, brought towards the viewer, serious and indeterminate. In his last great work in the Monastery of Stavronikita, Theophanis recalls the similar figures of the two saints in his first wall-paintings, in the Monastery of Anapafsas at Meteora, modelled on Cretan icons of the fifteenth century.

Chatzidakis 1986, 54, 106.

*179. Theophanis Strelitzas Bathas, the Deesis, 1546.*

*Mount Athos, Stavronikita Monastery, katholikon (narthex, east wall).*

Prominently placed over the Royal Door, on the east side of the narthex towards the nave, the Deesis (Trimorph) takes on in its symbolism a special significance from the viewpoint of the history of the Monastery of Stavronikita. Interceding with the apocalyptic Christ for the members of the monastery and the world, are the Virgin, to whom the

Byzantine katholikon was formerly dedicated, and St Nicholas, patron of the Post-Byzantine monastery which was renovated on the base of the ruined and burnt one, by Patriarch Jeremiah I (1522-1546). As in analogous cases, St Nicholas, as the honoured person, occupies the position in the Deesis established for St John the Baptist. The great painter and monk from Crete, Theophanis Strelitzas, surnamed Bathas, who, with his son Symeon, undertook to decorate the katholikon, provides in the Deesis one of the important examples of his art in the monastery. The figures serious and serene, Christ's gaze bright with mystical vigilance, project to the waist in a closed composition in the conch, where the relationship of the figures is ranked harmoniously in size, position and pose. For Christ, the painter adopts a type of the Pantokrator, as in the dome, very similar to a Palaiologan icon in Venice, which his namesake and possible relative Thomas (Tomios) Bathas, and Michael Damaskinos later used as a model in their icons. The hands of the Virgin and of St Nicholas, crossed in supplication, derive from an Italo-Cretan example by Nikolaos Tzafouris.

Chatzidakis 1986, 33, 55.

*180. The Nativity, 1548.*

*Meteora, Barlaam Monastery, katholikon (nave, vault of the south cross arm).*

In 1542 the founders of the Barlaam Monastery, the brothers Nektarios and Theophanis Apsaras, scions of an old, noble family from Ioannina, built the church of All Saints as katholikon of the monastery. Of Athonite type, tetrastyle, cross-in-square with dome and lateral conches-choirs, it was decorated with wall-paintings in 1548, most probably by the Theban Frangos Katelanos, of whom an important and the only signed work are the wall-paintings in the chapel of Ayios Nikolaos in the Great Lavra Monastery on Mount Athos, executed in 1560. The tetrastyle narthex-lite was painted by the brothers Georgios, a priest, and Frangos Kontaris, who also hailed from Thebes, in 1566.

In the vault of the south arm of the cross, above the prophetic vision of Christ Emmanuel at the top of the choir, is the multiform, multi-figural representation of the Nativity, a large narrative composition full of movement and resounding with festive colour. The Virgin, kneeling in the cave, in accordance with a current type which derives from a fifteenth-century Italo-Cretan model, leans with



crossed hands over the holy infant in the wicker manger. Around, rendered on a smaller scale, an unprecedented number of episodes dispersed on the mountain illustrate in detail the accounts of Matthew (II:9-11) and Luke (II:8-20). The angel-star, riding on a white horse, leads the Magi in two successive episodes, in a rare appearance of the type familiar in Palaiologan painting, adopted in earlier wall-paintings in the Great Meteoron (1483) and the monasteries on the Island of Ioannina; to the right of the cave, in a formal scene, the Magi in Mary's house pay homage to the child and present the gifts. At the right edge of the summit, the shepherds show their fear at the sight of the angel, in addorsed groups 'the heavenly hosts' raise 'Glory to God in the highest'; below left, the shepherds arrive at the cave and confirm the saviour's birth. On the verge of the wall-painting, left, Joseph converses with the old shepherd; in the middle the homely midwife, sitting on the ground, prepares the child's bath with the help of Salome, who wears a kerchief with grace; at the right, the shepherd boy, seated on the rock and jauntily playing his pipe, watches over the flock.

Nikonanos 1987, 39ff.

#### 181. *The Betrayal, 1548.*

*Meteora, Barlaam Monastery, katholikon (nave, south choir).*

In the conch of the south arm of the cross, in the bottom zone of compositions, the large cycle of the Passion of Christ that decorates the church commences. The Betrayal, right, accurately renders the iconographic model of the representation with four episodes, found in the initial decoration of the Philanthropinon Monastery on the Island of Ioannina, probably of 1531/32, which constitutes an archetype for other wall-paintings of the local Epirote School as well. Nevertheless the difference in execution and the strong personal style of the painter in the Barlaam Monastery contribute to the essential difference of interpretation. The mountain rises to a sheer summit in the middle, separating the episodes at the sides above, and the mobile complex of Christ with Judas is placed near the centre, in a manner which strengthens the agitation of the composition, and intensifies the violence and passion. The physiognomies are heavy, the gazes frenzied, the gestures and poses of the soldiers and Jews quick, nervous and at the edges irascible. The figures 'tumble down' in front, the colour deepens, the emphatic red contributes to the heightened tone of the drama.

#### 182-183. *The Crucifixion, 1548.*

*Meteora, Barlaam Monastery, katholikon (nave, west wall).*

The wall-paintings of the katholikon, excepting the *lite*, an exciting, imaginative and inspired work of an accomplished representative of the local Epirote School – in all probability Frangos Katelanos – counter to the calm, Classical character and decorum of the Cretan wall-paintings in the Anapafsas Monastery, and later in the Great Meteoron (1552), the torrential eloquence of a dynamic, anticlassical style, whose expression is close to baroque. With dramatic plot, dense and agitated action, and rapid narration, the paintings inundate the surfaces with figures and compositions which give the viewer the impression that they are detached from them and suspended in space. The Crucifixion, a wide, monumental composition on the west wall, is characteristic of the painting in the nave. The precedent for its iconographic and stylistic treatment of the theme can be sought in the painting of 1542 in the katholikon of the Philanthropinon Monastery on the Island of Ioannina, probably a work of Katelanos, where the Crucifixion is contiguous with the Flagellation and the Entombment on the west gable of the nave. In front, on the faceted surface of the walls, rise the crosses. With a repellent curve of the body and wild, terrified look, the soldier plunges the spear into the side of the Crucified Christ and the executioners at the edges break the robbers' legs. John, left, stands beside the Virgin with the women; behind the centurion, right, the Jewish 'mockers'; beyond, the dividing of the robes. At the margin of the representation, the graves open and the dead come to life. Crowds of people, lament, violence and tumult on the irregular rocks of Golgotha.

Acheimastou-Potamianou 1983, 177, 180.

#### 184. *The Dormition of the Virgin, 1548.*

*Meteora, Barlaam Monastery, katholikon (nave, west wall).*

The Dormition extends above the entrance to the nave, a monumental, multi-figural composition, richly coloured and with many details in gold. Christ, close to the Virgin, his triple mandorla encircled by cherubim, holds in his hands his mother's soul, clad in a maphorion and winged. The two archangels bow beside him and lead the Virgin up to the wide-open gates of heaven. At the left, the angels in entourage honour the Virgin, and at the right, the apostles are huddled together with disturbed movements of lamentation. In front, in miniature, the archangel with



raised glaive rushes at Jephonias, who falls down with his defiling hands cut off. Above, each apostle arrives separately on a cloud, with an accompanying angel inside, just as at Sopoćani much earlier; and to the dilatory Thomas, the Virgin offers her girdle. The clouds bearing the apostles are flooded with fantastic, monstrous figures in grisaille, the same as those formed in the clouds with the groups of saints in the earlier Last Judgement in the Stratigopoulos Monastery on the Island of Ioannina, of 1543. The first known and rare examples of figures of this type, formed in the rocks, are encountered in the thirteenth century in the Nativity in the Omorphi Ekklesia at Palaiochora, on Aegina, and in the Hospitality of Abraham in the Taxiarchs of Kostaniani at Dodoni, near Ioannina. From the fourteenth to the sixteenth century airy figures of birds and monsters 'enliven' the clouds.

185. *The Archangel Michael and St Theodore the Tyro, 1548.*

*Meteora, Barlaam Monastery, katholikon (nave, north choir).*

The Archangel Michael, patron saint of the city of Ioannina, birthplace of the Apsaras family, heads the military saints in the north choir, in the position of honour next to the iconostasis. Opposite him, in the south conch, is St John the Baptist, eponymous saint and protector of the first monastery founded by Nektarios and Theophanis on the Island in the lake of Ioannina. Michael, Commander-in-Chief, in splendid military uniform, holding his sword on high in his right hand and an unfurled scroll low down in his left, is depicted in the model of the figure that occupies the same honorary position in the katholikon of the Philanthropinon Monastery, probably of 1531/32. The text on the scroll differs: in Barlaam it designates the archangel as guardian of the church, as in the Great Meteoron (1483) and in the Monastery of Anapafsas. The next saints to the left, Theodore the Stratilatis and Theodore the Tyro, are also depicted in iconographic types identical with those of the Philanthropinon Monastery. Theodore the Tyro, at Michael's side, holds his spear upright on the ground with his right hand and proffers his sword in its scabbard with his left, in parallel position, at the height of the shoulder, from which the large, curvilinear shield hangs behind, fastened with a gold strap. Gold crossed ribbons adorn the saint's head. The coloration is impressive in the contrast of indigo and vermilion and with the copious gold highlights on the uniform

and weapons. Imposing, haughty figures, with pronounced poses and gestures, they have a gold halo decorated in relief and a relief *encolpium* of Christ on the chest, features suited to the paintings of the local Epirote School.

186. *The Road to Calvary, 1552.*

*Meteora, Monastery of the Great Meteoron, katholikon (nave, west vault).*

Towards the middle of the sixteenth century, the Great Meteoron was in its heyday. In 1544/45 a new katholikon was built. A magnificent church, dedicated to the Transfiguration of the Saviour, of Athonite type, tetrastyle, cross-in-square, with dome and choirs and a tetrastyle narthex-lite, it incorporated the old, fourteenth-century katholikon as its sanctuary. Equally magnificent is its painted decoration, one of the most important and most fully preserved works of the Cretan School, which was completed in November 1552, probably by the painter Tzortzis, known from the Athonite Monastery of Dionysiou and the Dousikou Monastery in Thessaly.

On the south side of the west arm of the cross of the nave, in the cycle of the Passion high up, the Road to Calvary is depicted in a synoptic composition, after Pilate's Washing of the Hands. The mountains recede into the background, with parallel peaks and stepped rocky planes. In front of them, on the soft, uneven, flower-covered ground, the procession makes its way. Christ, in a purple chiton with broad sema, walks in the middle, in open step, his hands tied at the wrists. He is hurried along by the leader of the detachment of soldiers, who holds the rope, and the soldier with his hand on his shoulder behind. Simon of Cyrene walks ahead with the heavy cross, and at the edge, left, soldiers and Jews follow. Following from afar above, are the Virgin and her female companions, figures in miniature, expressing their sorrow, in a cleft in the mountain. Certain traits, the type of the composition, figures, gestures and poses directly link the representation with the late fifteenth-century Italo-Cretan icon of the same theme by Nikolaos Tzafouris, in the Metropolitan Museum, New York. The lovely wall-painting in the Great Meteoron, with more extensive recounting, extols the dramatic character of the event, with the strong, heavy colours, the density of the figures and the frontal poses of the soldiers, left, and of Christ, right, in the unequal rhythm of the narration.

Chatzidakis - Sophianos 1990, 37ff.



187. *The Wedding at Cana, 1552.*

*Meteora, Monastery of the Great Meteoron, katholikon (nave, south choir).*

The Wedding at Cana, in the nave, follows the model elaborated by Theophanis in the neighbouring Monastery of Anapafsas, in a more condensed composition, compact and cold, with certain changes and a limiting of the figures. The scene is embraced by a building with transverse wings, high up in the background, while the festive red curtain, its flaps uplifted at the edges, adds to its ambience. Seated at the semicircular marble table, spread with lavish viands, are the bride and groom, in the middle, in formal pose, with two aged banqueters right and Christ, on a throne in prominent position, left. Standing behind him is the Virgin, who tells him that the wine is finished. Christ stretches out his hand to bless the water which the youth in front is pouring into the jars, and it turns into wine. A serving girl with crossed hands waits patiently behind the bridegroom. The chest with the elegant vessels on top, on the right of the representation in front of the table in the Anapafsas wall-painting, is omitted, as is the quaint servant bringing the tray. Though the painting is executed in faultless technique, it lacks vitality and grace in comparison with the earlier one by Theophanis.

188-189. *Greek Philosophers, 1560.*

*The Island of Ioannina, Philanthropinon Monastery, katholikon (south exonarthex).*

The decoration in the three exonarthexes of the katholikon was evidently executed by two significant painters, of Theban origin, the priest Georgios and his brother Frangos Kontaris, who worked in Epiros and at Meteora. It is likely that these same painters had previously completed the decoration in the lower parts of the narthex, painting also the dedicatory scene of the Philanthropinoi on the conch-arcosolium of its north side (no. 190). In the south exonarthex is the famous representation of the seven wise men of the Greeks. The ancient sages, Plato, Apollonios, Solon, Aristotle, Plutarch, 'Thucydides the philosopher' and Chilon are depicted standing in dialogue, with long inscribed scrolls, lively authoritative poses and gestures, and intriguing sartorial elements. An inscription which runs across the top refers to their secret conclave in a house in Athens, where 'they started the wisest and secret discourse concerning the presence of Christ, our God'. Theological interest in the seminal discourse of the ancients is already apparent in Late Byzantine wall-

paintings, with the inclusion of Greek philosophers in the Tree of Jesse, as well as in Cretan painting from the fifteenth century. The independent and unusual composition in the Philanthropinon Monastery, which is linked with very ancient apocryphal texts, did not remain an unicum.

Xyngopoulos 1926, 136ff. Acheimastou-Potamianou 1983, 182ff.

190. *Dedicatory scene, c.1550.*

*The Island of Ioannina, Philanthropinon Monastery, katholikon (narthex, north wall).*

On the face of a blind conch-arcosolium in the narthex, the dedicatory scene of the Philanthropinoi is elaborated in a singular composition of funerary character. Standing right, the patron of the monastery, St Nicholas, addresses to Christ, who projects in the sky and blesses, a prolix supplication written on his long scroll, on behalf of the departed Philanthropinoi, who kneel before him, and on behalf of the abbot priest-monk Ioasaph Philanthropinos and 'his students' (monks), expressing warm gratification for their work in the monastery. The inscriptions recording the deaths of the Philanthropinoi (fourteenth-sixteenth century) furnish important evidence for the prosopography of the Ioannina branch of this aristocratic Byzantine family. Head of the deceased is Michael 'καί μέγας οἰκονόμος, ἔτι δέ καί ὑποψήφιος τῆς ἁγιωτάτης μητροπόλεως Ἰωαννίνων' (and Megas Oikonomos, and candidate for the most holy metropolis of Ioannina) (†1341/42). There follow the protasekrites of Ioannina Georgios (†1356/57), the monk Makarios (†1504/5), the priest-monk Neophytos (†1531/32) and the sakelarios of Ioannina Mourikis (Maurikios) and later monk Matthaios (†1533/34). Michael Philanthropinos had greatly contributed in 1291/92 to the renovation of the katholikon of the monastery, as mentioned in another inscription in the nave. Ioasaph had converted and enlarged the original timber-roofed, Post-Byzantine church into a vaulted church with narthex-lite and exonarthexes. The various parts were adorned with splendid wall-paintings, also of the Epirote School (see no. 173). Hundreds of representations and figures make up the impressive and, from the thematic aspect, perhaps the richest ensemble of church wall-paintings from the period of acme of Post-Byzantine painting.

Acheimastou-Potamianou 1983, 21ff., 181ff.



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